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RECOLLECTIONS  
LITERARY AND POLITICAL

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

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## FORTY YEARS AT THE BAR

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‘As interesting as it is illuminating. . . .’

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‘Mr. Balfour Browne’s reminiscences are very professional, very personal, and very piquant.’

*The Sphere.*

# RECOLLECTIONS LITERARY AND POLITICAL

BY

J. H. BALFOUR BROWNE, K.C.  
LL.D., D.L., ETC.

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## CHAPTER I

### EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

A. K. H. B.—*The Recreations of a Country Parson*—The recreations of a somewhat busy lawyer—Edinburgh University—Professor Blackie—Edinburgh's pride in hospitals and monuments—Blackie a picturesque monument—The way he taught Greek—Argument with Ernest Jones—Lecture on 'Scottish Song'—The Pulpit and the Stage—Professor Sellar—At Kenbank—Professor P. G. Tait, *Recent Advances in Science*.

A CERTAIN writer of the old time—forty years seems so long ago—was known, as everything is in our days, by initials, and signed himself A. K. H. B. He wrote a book entitled *The Recreations of a Country Parson*. I forget what the recreations were, but I believe he amused himself with his pen, for I remember reviewing, in those days, another book by him called *Changed Aspects of Unchanged Truths*, which was, in fact, a volume of sermons delivered in St. Andrews, and which he had not courage enough to publish under their proper name. And really the 'changed aspects' was only the name for the old sermons which Dr. Boyd had already inflicted upon his followers. But the title of the earlier work attracted me—*The Recreations of a Country Parson*. The recreation of a man who is busy in one way, according to his calling, is to be busy in another way according to his heart, and in a long life I have found leisure too much for me, and have made holiday in some kind of work I was not called upon to do. It is upon the uncharted and perhaps forbidden

excursions of children from the beaten path that they find all the treasures, and I think it is upon these divagations that I found as much of my pleasure as I had a right to expect. But in a profession like the law, a reputation for anything but law or glibness is a misfortune to a man, and most of my recreations have been strictly anonymous, and it is only now that I can make partial confession to having been a dabbler in literature. Even the recollection and confession of my memories of these illicit doings is not an unpleasant occupation for the 'retired leisure' of one who has not learned the art of doing nothing well.

When at the University of Edinburgh, I was a member of Professor Blackie's Greek class. Edinburgh, to which Blackie came from Aberdeen, he described as very 'West endy and East windy,' and I do not know which of these qualities is the most repulsive. But Edinburgh, when it lost Blackie, lost one of its most picturesque monuments. There are two things that Edinburgh people used to be proud of. Of course they were legitimately proud of the Castle, the Calton Hill, and Salisbury Crags, but they were less legitimately high-headed about their hospitals and monuments. Of their hospitals, Donaldson's is the decoration of a suburb, and George Heriot's (the 'jingling Geordie' of James I.) is the proud possession of its heart. But the monuments were its chief glory. There was Scott's in Princes Street—a steeple without a church; Nelson's on the Calton Hill—an old-fashioned churn; and the National Monument on the same eminence, by which the Modern Athens tried to imitate the capital of Greece by erecting a ruin. But in justice to Edinburgh, it is fair to point out that it was its poverty,

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and not its will, that consented to leave these ruins of a building which was never built, as a monument of a nation. When Emerson visited Carlyle at Craigenputtock, a farmhouse among the heathery hills of Dunscore, Carlyle pointed out to his visitor a piece of road near by which marked in its incompleteness an abortive enterprise, and called it 'the grave of the last sixpence.' But here, on the Calton Hill, you have not only the grave of the last sixpence from the penurious national purse, but the monument of the grave.

But what I wanted to say was, that of all the monuments of Edinburgh when I was a student there, the most picturesque was John Stuart Blackie, Professor of Greek in the University. He had a fine, thin, living face, a bubbling, enthusiastic nature. He wore a plaid over his shoulders and round his spare frame. A soft hat with a broad brim thatched his rollicking head, and he carried a stick with a silver knob. I have seen him a hundred times strutting—he knew he was an ornament—in Princes Street, always with admiration. As to his merits as a teacher of Greek, I was too careless a student to judge. But for the man I had then very enthusiastic admiration. There is a fine portrait of him—the grey hair seen beneath the broad brim of his hat, a finger or two in the folds of his plaid, and the silver-headed stick in his other hand—by Sir George Reid, which will keep old memories alive, and tell those who never saw him that I was right in speaking of him as a monument. Even the stick had a history. It had been left to him by some admirer, and had the testator's crest on the silver top of it. But the Inland Revenue has vigilant eyes, and the Professor was summoned

if that is the right word, for using a crest without having paid a guinea to a defrauded government. That it was not his crest was the feeble plea which was scouted by a discriminating bench, and the Professor had to pay some penalty—I forget what—for his loyalty to his old friend, the testator.

This is not the place to speak of his propaganda in favour of better University education in Scotland, or his views as to the proper way to pronounce Greek. I cannot pass any opinion either upon his translation of Goethe or *Æschylus*. The former was distinctly 'spirited.' Indeed, everything he did was spirited. His discursive lectures on things in general to his Greek classes effervesced. He was full of spirits, which were always overflowing. He was a boy in his age, and had never learned dignity. Once he announced, by a written document on the door of his classroom, that 'Professor Blackie would be unable to meet his classes to-day.' A sprouting wit of a student altered the intimation by striking out the 'c' in classes, which left it that the Professor would be unable to meet his 'lasses' to-day. But, as Shakespeare says, Blackie knew a trick worth two of that, and before he left he took out the 'l' and left the announcement that he was unable to meet his 'asses.' He wrote much, even poetry, which was excellent, but not quite poetry. While I was a member of his class he challenged Mr. Ernest Jones, the Chartist, to a public discussion on Democracy. It was to take place in the Music Hall in Edinburgh, not an inappropriate place, on two consecutive nights. I went, and there were many other students present who decided which of the two debaters had the best of it by their political convictions, and not by their judicial faculties, if they had any. The

noise was excellent. I forget now, if I knew then, which really had the best of the argument, but I know which should have had the best of it.

On another occasion the Professor was lecturing at Stirling on 'Scottish Song,' and said some quite true and some excellent things about the 'bubbling well of Scottish song' into which he dipped his can. In the course of it he sang many songs, and said, 'Scotland was powerful in songs, sermons, and shillings—songs as represented by Burns, sermons by Chalmers and Guthrie, and shillings by Adam Smith'—and at the end he read 'A man's a man for a' that' 'with great birr.' At the close of which the newspaper report has it: 'To the immense delight of the audience he hugged the Provost in exemplification of Burns's prediction that "man to man, the warld o'er, shall brothers be for a' that," and sat down amidst roars of laughter and loud applause.'

There, as some would think, you have Blackie at his best. But, like the Scotsman, 'I have my doubts.' Some men who believe that genius and eccentricity are closely allied rather affect the latter with a view to a reputation for the former. One cannot quite acquit Blackie if such a charge were preferred against his memory. Thus, in his Greek class, we found after a mention of Aristophanes, and after calling 'Punch' the British Aristophanes, he went into a defence of the Stage against the Pulpit, and made copious comments on Sir Henry Irving in *Hamlet* and *The Bells*.

Here is some of his teaching of Greek: 'I wish to say here from this chair publicly, what I have often said privately to distinguished members of the clerical profession, that I have much oftener felt the gracious tear-drop of human sympathy and devout

pity drawn from my eyes by the vivid impersonations of the stage than by the most fervid appeals of eloquence ever delivered from the Scottish pulpit.'

This is all well in its way, but it is a long way from Liddell and Scott. Indeed Blackie was more like a beacon fire than a professor in a dignified chair.

Professor Sellar, who was Professor of Humanity at the same time, was very much of a professor and a scholar. I was a member of his class, and learned a little in it, but there was nothing there as in Blackie's class to set a light to random enthusiasm. He succeeded in the chair Professor Pillans, whose fame rests on his having been mentioned by Byron in *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers* when he said :

‘And paltry Pillans can traduce a friend.’

A good many years after I had left his class I had a cottage for the autumn months in St. John's Town of Dalry, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, and found Professor Sellar making holiday in his picturesque autumn home at Kenbank. He was kind enough to ask me to dinner. It was not I but Dr. Gunion Rutherford, the Headmaster of Westminster School, who made the cruel and, as far as I know, utterly unjustifiable conundrum : ‘Why is Kenbank like a Catholic church ?’ And the answer was, ‘Because there you can see the host elevated.’ See how these scholars love one another.

Tait—Peter Guthrie Tait—was Senior Wrangler, and in my day was Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh. He was joint-author with Thomson (Lord Kelvin afterwards) of Thomson and Tait. He was a big man, and the

attics of his head overbore the other storeys in his face. His subject was full of interest for young people—like Christmas lectures at the Royal Institution—for the young are always interested in something going on, and an experiment is to them the next best thing to a conjuring trick. He was good enough to give me a prize for an essay on 'The Conservation of Energy in the Cosmical Phenomena' (the title was worth the money), and I afterwards, in 1877, reviewed a book of his, *Lectures on Recent Advances in Science*, for the *Times*.

Professor A. C. Fraser, David Masson, and Patrick MacDougall were also my teachers while I was at the University of Edinburgh, but I have mentioned all these with respect elsewhere.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY VENTURES WITH A 'PRENTICE PEN

'A College Magazine'—Stevenson's essay—The *University Magazine* of 1866—First and last number—Story for a bazaar—Many writings 'returned with thanks'—The desire of all the young to write—A writing-master poet—My early efforts at poetry, Mr. George Gilfillan on—Volume published in 1880 noticed by Professor Nichol—Temptations to give up the plodding professions—Long waiting for practice at the Bar—Reviewing novels for the *Morning Post*—Invited to become a dramatic critic in a small way—Dinners in Hall—Sir Lauder Brunton and Sir David Ferrier—A spiritualistic séance—Ferrier's *Localisation of the Functions of the Brain*—Mr. and Mrs. Holmes—Sir T. Wemyss Reid—The *Leeds Mercury*—Dinner at Headingley—James Hannay—Descendant of Joseph Addison—'Special Wire'—Sir W. Harcourt, the Solicitor-General—Articles on the Royal Academy—Wemyss Reid on 'Charlotte Brontë'—Letter from Wemyss Reid as to Charlotte Brontë and the Brussels episode—Writing law-books—The regulation of railways—Filing the *Times*—Wrote for the *Times*—The law of railways—Legal writings not literature—Baron Martin on Shakespeare—Wrote for *Law Magazine*, *Westminster Review*, *British Quarterly*—In 1880, volume of poems; 1885, volume of prose poems.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, in his *Memories and Portraits*, has one of his delightful rambling essays under the heading of 'A College Magazine,' in which he tells how he and two other students, one of whom was Robert Glasgow Brown, an aspiring youth of whom I had a glimpse or two afterwards in London, started a college magazine which lived for four struggling months and then died in some financial convulsions. He has, in the same volume, re-edited and reproduced one of the articles from that abortive

periodical. He says he had, even when exalted by the thought of being a joint-editor of the thing, an impression that it would be a fiasco. But he might have had more assurance from experience, for in my day—and that was before Stevenson's—there had been a University magazine started which found it impossible to attain a longevity even of four brilliant months, but almost died in its birth with the first number. I am perhaps to some extent responsible for the death of that innocent little magazine in grey (not in yellow, like Stevenson's), for I contributed a story which was begun in the first number and was to be finished in the second. But the second, alas! never saw the light. Still, it is quite possible that the unpublished part of 'Charlie Sulley' had as much vogue as the chapters which were printed, which I fear no one ever read but myself. That falling star of a magazine flashed across our zenith in March 1866. It was almost the first time I had seen my writings in print, and, although like Touchstone's *Audrey*, it was a 'poor thing,' it was 'my own.'

My next venture into fiction, for it was in fiction that I was determined to excel, was in connection with a bazaar. I wrote and had printed a small story entitled *How I went to a Bazaar*, which was to be sold for the benefit of the particular school in connection with which the bazaar was being held in the Music Hall in Edinburgh. It was hawked about at sixpence a copy amongst the people who were fingering the wool or beadwork in the various 'stalls,' and who thought, as they always do at bazaars, that the articles had been marked at ridiculously high prices. But I am not at all convinced that any one bought a copy, and if any one did, it would probably have confirmed them in their opinion

as to the exorbitant charges, if they paid sixpence for that little pink rubbish of a book. Still, although when the printer's bill came to be settled I believe that the school did not profit much by my literary effort, I think perhaps I did. A boy's ambition requires some encouragement, and even fiascos teach.

But although these were my first printed works, I had written much which was still left in the safety of manuscript, and like some of the other things I wrote, and which editors forgot to 'return with thanks,' these have, no doubt, found their way into that *Cloaca Maxima* of literature, the waste-paper basket.

But every one wished to be literary in these my young days. There is a question in the Bible, 'What went ye out for to see: a reed shaken by the wind?' All the dubs in my young days were surrounded by vocal reeds. Every twig screeched. I had a writing-master once who was my guide to 'pot-hooks and hangers,' who wrote and published at his own expense a volume of poems. I, perhaps luckily, have no memory of them now, and probably laughed at them when I read them. But I have become more tolerant of these hedge-birds, who, if they do not sing for your delight, twitter for their own harmless amusement. Well, I aspired to twitter, but I fear I inflicted my raw strains upon some kind and indulgent people. I know my first attempts were read by Thomas Aird, and I found lately a letter from George Gilfillan, who had some reputation as a writer in my youth, which shows that I had inflicted these 'tunings up' upon his kindness. He wrote:

DUNDEE, 16th August 1870.

There is much pleasant matter in Mr. Browne's poems. Many fine fancies. Some very tolerable wit in the epigrams,

and a general freshness and vivacity in the whole production. I do not, however, think a volume composed of these verses would succeed. 'Columbus,' the longest, is the least of the poems, and is scarcely up to the subject. For the rest, as Scott says, 'Your fugitive verses often become stagnancy with the public.' Mr. Browne has excellent powers, and should do something much better and weightier than anything in these poems.

GEORGE GILFILLAN.

I suppressed these 'poems' according to this excellent advice, and I don't know whether I did anything 'better or weightier,' but no verses of mine saw the light until 1880, when Messrs. Maclehose published a volume of my poems, which were, by the way, too much praised by Professor Nichol—himself a poet, and Professor in the University of Glasgow—in his review of the book in the *Glasgow Herald*. If you wait long enough you can become a critic even of your own works.

There are a great many temptations to a young man to give up one of the plodding professions, in which success even if attained comes very slowly, for literature, where, in the imagination at least of the aspirant, the returns are as quick as in a ready-money business. Even when I was reading for the Bar, I learned that the probationary period was so long that it had wearied out some stalwart fellows. It was said and believed that Bramwell, afterwards Baron, and ultimately Lord Bramwell, had done nothing at the Bar for seven years—as long as some one in the Bible served for a wife, only to be cheated in the end—and we believed that Herschel found success so slow to come to him that he thought of leaving the country and carrying his undoubted talents and piercing eyes into one of the colonies. There were dozens of discouragements for a youth

on the steps of the Law Courts. Indeed I was not even on the steps yet, but only in the street leading to them. I was reading in the chambers of a man in Lincoln's Inn—an excellent, thin man with a red-brick complexion which looked blue in winter, and belied his abstemious habits—or I was attending lectures on law by withered sticks of lawyers and, of course, keeping my terms by eating my dinners.

Under these rather unhopeful circumstances some one was good enough to introduce me to a Mr. Dumphy, who was, I think, the literary editor of the *Morning Post*, at that time an aristocratic three-penny paper, holding its head high in the presence of canaille penny ones. He asked me to review books for him, and I think my assent to his proposal was probably eager. I had a bundle of novels—they were mostly in three volumes in those days—given me to review, and I was to write a column about each of them without having the easy resource of sketching the plot. The books took some reading, for I was a novice at the art and could not make up my mind as to the merit of a novel, as some old hands could, without reading it. I knew there was a saying that you don't need to eat the whole leg of mutton to find out the taste of it. But as yet I had a conscience, and I read the books and then wrote my columns. It took me two hours to write enough to fill a column, and the remuneration (it is so long ago I suppose there is no harm in mentioning it) was ten shillings a column.

Well, although the pay was poverty-stricken, I was 'in literature' and reviewing books. I forgot most of the books that passed through my scathing hands, but I remember amongst them were

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William Black's *In Silk Attire* and Wilkie Collins's *Moonstone*, and I continued to write for the *Morning Post* for some time. Then came another great temptation. It seemed to be my fate to be a writer or journalist instead of a lawyer. I was asked by Mr. Dumphy if I would undertake the duty of dramatic critic and notice some or one of the pantomimes. To be in touch with books is something to a youth, to be in touch with the stage, even the stage which is filled with Clown and Columbine, and Pantaloona and the red-hot poker, is far more. But to undertake the work I would have had to remain in London over Christmas. I think the production to be noticed was a Boxing-day spectacle, and I was unwilling to give up my Christmas vacation, and I reluctantly declined. I never became, therefore, a dramatic critic, although some time after that I wrote some articles on Sir Henry Irving's acting for some semi-scientific periodical. 'Well,' as one contented man said, 'thank God for your misfortunes.' I am rather glad now that these invitations into literature—if journalism is literature, which I doubt—failed to capture me for the service of the servant pen.

One of the advantages of the continuance of the old system of qualifications for Call to the Bar by the keeping of terms, and the dining in the Hall of the Inn of Court to which the student belongs, was that in the social intercourse in Hall men learned from their fellows more than they did from the lectures. Besides one learned in Hall, in conversation, pleasantly; while one learned, say, from the learned author of *Legal Maxims*, in a lumbering and reluctant way, what was necessary to equipment for the profession.

Of course the conversation at dinners in Hall was not confined to legal subjects. The theatres came in for their share of lingual patronage, but the conversations which were most instructive were those in which some point of law or practice, some case, or some legal luminary was freely discussed, and some of the great lawyers who walked up the Hall to the Benchers' table would have had ringing ears if they could have overheard our criticisms of their merits or failings. But I had from the first set my face against becoming a lawyer and nothing but a lawyer, and I entertained the idea that a man should be an all-round man, not like some of the dried ferns in a herbarium, which are flattened out into thin dry layers. I have known some of these withered things. With the view of keeping in touch with other aspects of life than those which are to be gathered from *The Leading Cases* or *The Law of Evidence*, I still kept my friendship, which had begun at the University, with Lauder Brunton and David Ferrier. At that time they were living together, behind their brass plates in Somerset Street, Portman Square, and I saw a good deal of them and profited by their friendship, and I have always retained the respect and admiration I then formed for both these distinguished members of the medical profession. Sir Thomas Lauder Brunton was in the class of Medical Jurisprudence in the University of Edinburgh with me. He was a soft-spoken, hard-working little man, with an excellent scientific curiosity; Sir David Ferrier was a dapper, perky man, with some deserved confidence in himself, and just a pleasant touch of the tongue of his native Aberdeen in his English. He made early a great reputation by his work on the localisation of the

functions of the brain, which was the handbook of a sort of internal phrenology; for while Gall and Spurzheim judged of everything in character by the bone dome, Ferrier found that the various functions were connected with certain regions in the brain and certain convolutions. His earliest experiments with the electrodes on the brains of animals, like cats or rabbits—work which made the hair of certain anti-vivisectionists stand on end—were made at the West Riding Asylum at Wakefield, while Sir James Crichton-Browne was Medical Director, and I happened to be my brother's guest at the time. I remember well the scientific enthusiasm when, in answer to the electric stimulus, a cat, we will say, 'wagged its left ear,' a thing which Lord Dundreary, a stage figure of the long ago, could not do. His *Functions of the Brain and Localisation of Cerebral Disease* all came from the wagging of a tail in answer to the electric stimulus applied to some particular convolution. But it was before he was famous that we had those remarkable evenings in Somerset Street, on which I look back with regretful pleasure—pleasure because their pleasure is reflected in memory, and regret because those great days come again no more.

On one occasion Brunton, Ferrier, and I were of a party to see and hear certain spiritualistic manifestations of a Mr. and Mrs. Holmes in Quebec Street. I do not think that this was the Mr. Holmes who floated out of one window in Victoria Street and in at another, according to veracious witnesses, and some of whose utterances were referred to by Browning as a vomit of lies. Of *that* Mr. Holmes, Dr. Harrington Tuke, a feathery sort of a man, with side-whiskers, and a merry face wrinkling into a

smile, wrote when he married another medium, Miss Gloomiline, thus :

‘ Shall I wed ? ’ asked the maid  
Of the spirits so rappy.  
They replied, ‘ Quit your gloomy line ;  
Make your Home happy. ’

But we had real amusement at the séance in Quebec Street, and fooled the medium up to the top of his bent. We acted well, and while the spirits whose faces we saw, and the tambourines which floated in the darkened room, did not impress us, I think we impressed the spiritualists with the idea that we were credulous dupes. If I mistake not, Ferrier and I concocted a true account of these trick manufacturers for some journal.

Lauder Brunton, who only died in September last, was a South Country Scotsman, and was one of the physicians to St. Bartholomew’s Hospital. In 1889 the Nizam asked him to Haidarabad to conduct experiments to elucidate the occasionally fatal results of chloroform inhalation. Here the number of pariah dogs was diminished during his visit, and his report was a good deal barked at when he came home. I have his great work on *Materia Medica and Therapeutics* which he presented to me, and although I have not consulted it much, whenever there was any serious illness in my family I consulted him. The existence of such a man gave to me a confidence in the medical profession which perhaps it does not deserve. But it should be a laudable ambition to live up to such a standard of personal worth and professional excellence as Lauder Brunton set for his colleagues. When he died I lost a friend.

It was about this time that I came to know Sir T. Wemyss Reid well. He was editor of the *Leeds*

Mercury when first I knew him. He was a little, thick-set man, with a soft voice with a slight burr in it, but with a quick fair mind behind his not distinguished face. We were friends from those early days, although we saw less of one another in later times than I would have liked. But our separate professional walks took our steps farther and farther from the road of companionship. I remember I dined with him at Headingly, near Leeds, where he was then living. Carlyle somewhere points out that the boatmen on the Norfolk rivers still have a word for the storm or bore, 'Aegir,' which is only a corruption of the name of the Storm-god of the Scandinavians (I am quoting from memory, for the 'General Index' to his Works did not help me to find it), and he finely describes it as the peak of a submerged world. Well, that dinner at Headingly is the peak of a submerged world of hospitality. I do not quite remember who were the guests. I think that a Rev. Mr. Carpenter, a son of the physiologist, was one; my brother, Sir James Crichton-Browne, was another; but I do not know who the other guests were. As for dinner, I don't know what we had to eat or drink, but I know that we had two or three hours' talk, and it sparkled more than the wine. It is not often that ball-and-socket men come together, but when they do they fit, and it is an occasion. I have remembered that night, not to write it down, like Christopher North in his *Noctes*, but to treasure as an example of what society can be when it is at its best. Wemyss Reid told a story of James Hannay, the author of a forgotten novel, *Singleton Fontenoy*, and who was, or had been, editor of the *Edinburgh Courant*, and on one occasion contested

the Dumfries Burghs with Mr. Ewart (Capital Punishment Ewart), the name-father of Gladstone. According to Wemyss Reid, Hannay was rather an authority upon genealogies, or the roots of families. When he, Wemyss Reid, and some others were dining at some restaurant in the city—I like to think it was the old Cock in Fleet Street—and had been talking literature—for literature is an open fob into which any pick-purse can dip his hand—a gentleman who was sitting at another table approached and said, ‘Gentlemen, I have overheard accidentally some of your conversation, and have been very much interested. I have the more confidence in joining you because I am a lineal descendant of Joseph Addison.’

‘Sir,’ said Hannay, his knowledge of history now standing him in some stead, ‘Sir, Joseph Addison had one daughter and she was an idiot, which I admit gives plausibility to your story; but as she died before the age of puberty, it must be a bloody lie!’

I think the port at the Cock, if it was the Cock, must have been cheap.

Soon after the dinner at Headingly, Wemyss Reid wrote to me and said he wished to have some talk with me, and he came and lunched with me at the Junior Athenæum Club, which overlooks the Green Park—but has suffered from a good many climacterics, which are called ‘Whips,’ in its somewhat precarious career. What he wanted was that I should become a ‘Special Wire,’ I think it was called, for the *Leeds Mercury*. It was a time before my clients had found me out, and as I was living and waiting to be discovered in the Temple, I was pleased to accept his invitation.

A Special Wire is the green net of the entomologists for the butterflies of gossip. He catches

some fluttering rumour, and he pins it with a paragraph and sends it down to the provincial paper, and there it is in their glass-case museum the next morning. I really thought it a very pleasant occupation, but it was one of the temptations to journalism which might have diverted me to that tangled path from the high road of my profession. A Special Wire in these days picked up some piece of information at the Courts at Westminster, at the Club, or in such society as he happened to have a casual entrance to, and then he went and wrote a few lines and took them to the London office in Fleet Street before midnight, and away went the 'mot' over the wire, and one was as proud as Punch of having a part, however small, in the great machinery of the Press. Perhaps one felt a little mean sometimes, when one had got possession of some political or literary secret, to go and whisper it, not in the Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's, but of the Press. But one's conscience soon gets reconciled to being a kind of detective and getting ten shillings and sixpence for a paragraph, when some one had relied upon one's reticence and had trusted one with information which was probably quite untrue! I remember one triumph in my capacity as a Special Wire. I met at dinner, or at an 'At Home,' a lady whose husband was 'in the running' for the office of Solicitor-General. She told me that night that Sir William Harcourt was appointed to the office, and she was angry with the Government for having overlooked her husband's better claims. The *Leeds Mercury* the next morning had the news. About the same time I had a note from my informant saying that she found she had made a mistake, and that Sir William had not been appointed. That

rather 'short-circuited' the Special Wire, but there was nothing to be done. It would not do to contradict a Special Wire without derogating from his reputation for omniscience. But luck was on my side that time, for three days afterwards Sir William Harcourt was made Solicitor-General, and, as you see, the *Leeds Mercury* was the very first to know the important legal secret!

Wemyss Reid, too, put another temptation in my way to desert the law for letters, for he got me to write the *Leeds Mercury* articles on the Royal Academy, and I did that for about four years. I liked the work. I always dabbled or daubed with paint, and I thought I knew what Art was. At that time I had not, as I have since, made a small collection of the pictures of contemporary artists. There was nothing then to convict me of deplorable ignorance of art and want of taste, as some of my friends may think my walls do now, and I wrote my articles with a confidence which perhaps convinced the artists themselves. I am certain it did when I praised. But in these early days the impressionism kept within bounds, and the futurism was for the future.

In 1877 Wemyss Reid wrote a Monograph on Charlotte Brontë. I think at that time he was just about to leave Leeds and become editor of the *Speaker*, and managing director, if that is the right title, for Messrs. Cassell and Co. When he came to London we were near neighbours for two or three years in Bramham Gardens. But, as I say, he was still at Leeds when his Monograph and Swinburne's *Note on Charlotte Brontë* appeared. I was at that time writing articles for the *Westminster Review*, and I was asked to review these two books upon a woman who had a heart of fire under the hodon-grey dress

of a governess. I have not looked again at the article, which was republished in my *Literary Essays* in 1907, but I have here an interesting letter from Wemyss Reid, which is worth quoting :

'MERCURY' OFFICE,  
LEEDS, Nov. 2, 1877.

MY DEAR BALFOUR-BROWNE,—I wish I had the chance of a quiet talk with you, and I should then be able to tell you all I have to say about C. B., much more easily and satisfactorily than I can do now. *My* book turns upon what some of the intelligent reviewers have been good enough to dub 'the Brussels mystery.' The *Spectator* (I think) and an ass (whom you may possibly know) called R. Orme Masson, in the *Academy*, have been very bitter because I did not tell the whole truth about Charlotte's residence in Brussels. But how could I, whilst her husband still lives and favours me with an occasional letter of by no means an amicable kind? Now I'll tell you the 'truth'—it isn't very much after all, and I'll trust you to deal discreetly and gently with it. C. B. went to Brussels quite heart-whole. As a schoolgirl she had seen a certain rough Yorkshire squireen whose name has never been mentioned either by Mrs. Gaskell or myself, and from him she had painted Rochester. This person had unquestionably attracted her fancy as a schoolgirl, but never her love, and long before she wrote *Jane Eyre* I find passages in her letters in which she refers to him in a half-contemptuous way, speaking as freely of his faults as of those of any other of her acquaintances. Thus this is not to be counted a love affair. She had made an ideal hero of the gruff Yorkshireman, whom at school and in *Jane Eyre* she worked back to that ideal, while fully conscious of the fact that her ideas were founded on a delusion. But at Brussels everything was changed. There she met her master. I am not enough of an amateur of hearts to say whether it was exactly a state of love into which she fell, but she was undoubtedly fascinated and spellbound, owned herself under the influence of a 'superior spirit' (Good heavens! what blunders women make in that subject), and passed through all that half-painful, half-delicious state of struggling bondage which she pictures in the story of Lucy Snowe.<sup>xx</sup> Now for the

‘mystery.’ This man was married ; he was also her school-master, and he was the husband of that Madame Heger who, of course under an assumed name, figures in so disagreeable a light in *Villette*. Now, do you see what a painful time that must have been at Brussels. Charlotte, PERFECTLY pure in mind and heart, and yet captive to a clever, shrewd, eccentric man, the Paul Emanuel of the picture ; dogged day and night by a jealous, lying, unscrupulous old Belgian woman, forced to feed upon herself for she had no confidante until after her return to England (‘I cannot write what I want to say,’ she cries in one of her letters), and debarred from every social pleasure, went through a perfect agony of suffering during those dark years. She returned to Haworth a changed and disillusioned woman. Up to that time she had *not* been the Charlotte Brontë of Mrs. Gaskell’s book, but after that period she was. I have evidently failed to convey what I wished to do in my monograph, for I cannot conceive any ordinary critics being so dull as not to see the truth, if it was even hinted at. So I suppose I have led the whole brotherhood off on a wrong tack. But the truth was she went back to Haworth very unwillingly, with her heart still captive at Brussels, and with the strongest distaste for that dull monotonous life to which she felt herself doomed. Her brother’s fall produced not pity but loathing and contempt in her heart ; it was not *that* which drove her to find relief in song first and afterwards in fiction, but the burden of pain she had brought back from Belgium, and from which she was never henceforth to be free. One other real love affair she had in her life. It was, strange to say, with the original of ‘Dr. John.’ But she did not meet him till years after the Brussels experience ; not indeed until *Jane Eyre* was published and she had become famous. He was younger than herself ; admired her, perhaps even loved her ; and she owned that she could love him. But her common sense, assisted by ‘Dr. John’s’ mother, who dreaded the idea of such a union, came to the rescue, and she quietly put her good-looking and prosperous admirer aside. Her marriage at last was brought about through a sheer revolt against her father’s injustice. She *disliked* Mr. Nicholls, until indignation and pity compelled her to make his cause her own. And then, a pale, broken-down, disillusioned woman, out of whose life all the flavour had gone, she married him—and died. I don’t know that there

is anything new in this ; but still it may guide you to some new lights in reading my book and Mrs. Gaskell's.

Let me give you two little hints which have just come to me across the Atlantic, from Dr. Collyer, the great Unitarian preacher in Chicago, who was an Ilkley boy. He tells me that in his childhood there was a saying used by the shepherds on the hills, to any friend who was in circumstances of the greatest perplexity and difficulty : ' Thaa mun do as they do at Haworth ; do as thaa can.' Isn't that capital as a motto for the lives of the Brontës ? Perplexed and baffled at all points, they ' did as they could.' Next Dr. C. says that Haworth in those days had one redeeming feature, a splendid peal of bells which were famous in all the countryside, and to which as a boy he would listen on a Sunday morning from the crest of Ilkley moor. He suggests that the *nom de plume* of the sisters ' Bell ' was taken from this one good thing in Haworth. I am disposed to think it quite possible. Forgive me for not telling you more ; but if you come across anything you would like to ask me a question about, do not fail to do so, and I 'll answer to the best of my ability. I dare say you would notice *The Times* review of this morning. It is a very kind one.—

Yours ever,

T. WEMYSS REID.

Wemyss Reid wrote a novel ; I forget its name, and I don't think he cared to remember it, but his biographies of W. E. Forster (1888), and Lord Houghton (1889), and Gladstone (1899) are all excellent. I knew well a brother of Sir T. Wemyss Reid, who was the General Manager of what was then called the Dublin, Wicklow, and Wexford Railway Company, a man somewhat like his literary brother, and of real ability and attractive personality.

But I must make shorter work of my recollections of these early attempts at literature. About 1870 I wrote, and had published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall, two novels, and about the same time another story by me was published—and paid for—by Messrs. H. S. King and Co.—and went to a second edition,

But in 1874 I began to have some practice at the Bar, and although I have never in all these years dried my pen, the duties of a taskmaster profession made it impossible for me to devote much time to writing. In 1871 I wrote a book on *The Law of Carriers*, but a law-book is not literature, and the book was, I believe, the reason of my being appointed secretary to the Railway Commission in 1874. The Railway Commissioners in those days had very little to do. The Court had been established to regulate railways, as it was called, and from the very small number of cases which then and since have come before that august tribunal, it would seem as if railways did not require regulation, and that a grumbling public did not want this new-fangled tribunal to do anything for them. As the office hours were ten to five, and as there was little real public duty to be performed by the secretary and the chief clerk (we called him chief clerk for the dignity it lent him, for there was only one), except to file the *Times*, I would have had ample time, as many other Government servants have, to devote myself to the pen, had it not been for my growing practice at the Bar. It was in those years that I wrote a good many articles for the *Times*, during the time that Mr. Chenery was editor; one or two of these have been republished. At the same time I wrote law-books on the Law of Rating, and, in conjunction with Mr. Theobald, now a Master in Lunacy, a work on the Law of Railways, which—I have no pride in this compilation, which is only a record of assiduous work—I may call a standard work. I have already tried to distinguish between such writing and literature. Indeed, such mere writing, which demands nothing but accuracy, is the

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crudest, although a useful form of transcription. Journalism, which does not make such a demand on accuracy, and is a production which is for the day, is perhaps a little higher in the scale of evolution. But literature, where imagination holds the pen, and the thought is plaited with feeling, is the last word in the ascent of expression. The difference is well illustrated by a story of the late Baron Martin, a bluff lawyer who, when on circuit with a brother judge, admitted that he had never read Shakespeare. His colleague had a Shakespeare with him, and lent it to the judge, recommending to his notice *Romeo and Juliet*. The Baron tucked the book under his arm and went to bed. When he came down the next morning he was asked what he thought of the play, and he said, 'I don't believe a word of it!' But the same learned judge was not quite accurate in his own language, for once, when sentencing a man who had been convicted of sheep-stealing, he said: 'My man, if you had been tried for this eighty years ago, you would have been hung to-morrow morning.'

But although my hands were now pretty full of briefs, I still found time to write a good many articles for the *Westminster Review*, the *British Quarterly*, and the *Law Magazine*, until I found that the blue pencil which marks briefs and papers ousted for a time what used to be called the polite pen from between my thumb and forefinger. And it was only occasionally that I could still keep up a left-handed connection with literature. It was in 1880 that Messrs. Maclehose published a volume of what I called my poems, and in 1885 that Messrs. Longmans, Green and Co. published a small volume of, I don't know what to call them—essaylets, prose poems,

what you will; but these books have long been out of print, and have passed into the oblivion which I have no doubt—as they did not touch the public taste—they deserved. I write these guarded confessions not to advertise these dead and buried productions, but to show you that even while devoting myself strenuously—none of my clients will quarrel with the use of that word—to my arduous profession (of which I have spoken elsewhere), I still had occasional dealings, if not with the Muses, with some of their poor understudies. But all my work was anonymous, for there was a tradition at the Bar that solicitors were suspicious of counsel who wrote, and that they have an idea that a man cannot serve God and Mammon; but whether it is the law that is God, and literature that is Mammon, I am unable to say. During the greater part of the time I was at the Bar, although I published many books, none of them appeared under my own name, and it was not until I was preparing to turn my back on my profession, and to try my hand at politics, that I published any books under my own name; and as these had a left-handed connection with politics, and were intended to impress what used to be called free and independent electors, of course they were published without the disguise of anonymity. I think it still well to remain reticent as to these works of purer—shall I call it literature, which were published without a name, and as to those which had my name on the title-page, these will be referred to in their proper place. I remembered with reference to these the worldly-wise advice of a father to his son who was going out into the world: ‘My son, be spoken of; well, if you can, but be spoken of.’

## CHAPTER III

### PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy and doubt—Metaphysics—Two of my teachers: Professor MacDougall and Professor A. C. Fraser—*Works of Berkeley*—Prize in his class—Dugald Stewart, Reid, Hamilton and Brown—The *Scottish Philosophy* of ‘common-sense’—Ferrier’s *Institutes of Metaphysics*—Bishop Berkeley—Hume—Spinoza—Kant—Schwegler—Hutchinson Stirling—Hegel—Philosophical essays—Letter from Hutchinson Stirling.

‘PHILOSOPHY, when superficially studied,’ according to Bacon, ‘excites doubt; when thoroughly explored it dispels it.’ I fear it has never been ‘thoroughly explored.’ Some one said untruly of metaphysics, that it was a man searching for a black cat in a dark room when there was no cat there. But, of course, in my college days I had, as a part of the curriculum, to devote myself to philosophy. I had two teachers, and both of them earned my respect—and they were both real friends to a would-be learner. The one was Patrick C. MacDougall, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, a man with a blunt nose, a ruddy face, but with a heart that glowed too. He used to cross-examine his class, and the student who could answer his conundrums stood up. I may say with some old pride that I continually ‘took the floor,’ so much so that some of my envious class-fellows suggested that ‘I must be tired of standing.’

The other was Alexander Campbell Fraser, Pro-

fessor of Logic and Metaphysics, a rough-featured, grizzled-grey man when I knew him, and not quite an 'enthusing' teacher, although he produced a most excellent edition of the *Works of Berkeley* in 1871, which I reviewed in the *Journal of Mental Science*. In his class I got a prize for an essay, but although I have the book that was presented to me, which was Macaulay's *Essays*, I have quite forgotten the title of my own essay that was thus rewarded.

These two guides led me into the labyrinth, and I admit I was fascinated by the height of the rocks that had to be climbed and the dim obscurity of the place. Of course we began with the *Scottish Philosophy* of 'common-sense.' The *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, by Dugald Stewart, was one of the class text-books, and Mill's *Logic*, made down by Stebbing, was another. Reid's works, his *Inquiry into the Human Mind* and his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, were 'tasks.' Sir William Hamilton's *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic* were better reading, and Dr. Thomas Brown's *Lectures on Philosophy* were fairly well written, and were therefore easy reading. But the *Scottish Philosophy* of 'common-sense' struck me as a title both of tautology and unveracity. If the truth is not common-sense, then it is strange indeed, for according to so old an authority as Pliny, 'Philosophy is a modest profession; it is all reality and plain dealing. I hate solemnity and pretence with nothing but pride at the bottom of it.' It clearly ought to be 'reality and plain dealing,' but that is the last thing we find in the labyrinth, while for 'solemnity and pretence' it is not even surpassed by the pulpit. But it was also unveracious, for it pretended that philosophy was a

man-in-the-street sort of knowledge, and that was the 'pretence' of such a man as Reid, who had really not a philosophy at all, and of whom Ferrier, the author of the *Institutes of Metaphysics*, said that 'Reid in philosophy was like a whale in a clover-field.' But some one has pointed out that in the phrase, 'the right of private judgment,' the protestants have unduly emphasised the 'private,' and have to some extent ignored the 'judgment,' which is the kernel of the phrase. So in the philosophy of 'common-sense' the Scotsmen have emphasised the 'common' and paid less attention to the 'sense.'

I admit I walked for a time with my hand in their hand, but Hume and Berkeley soon showed me another road, and I followed them. I think I first was friends with Hume for his essays, and I can even now read and re-read these with profit. Of Berkeley, I first knew his *Three Dialogues* and read them with delight, and made marginal notes upon my copy. From these I went to the *New Theory of Vision* and *Principles of Human Knowledge*, but in time I knew my *Alciphron*; or, *The Minute Philosopher*, and even *Siris* well. As I say, I felt myself, in 1871, competent to write a long review of Fraser's *Berkeley*.

Sydney Smith said, 'Bishop Berkeley destroyed the world in one volume octavo, and nothing remained after that but mind, which experienced a similar fate from Mr. Hume in 1739.' And there was a grain of truth in his joke, and as Hume had cleared the ground, and had shown that 'sensationalism' fails to account for knowledge, it was left for Kant to show that sensations received into the universal *a priori* forms of space and time are reduced into perceptive objects in a synthesis of experience by the

categories. And Hegel thought that the ego developed its own categories. The futility of the Scottish common-sense philosophy, so called, was that it explained none of these things which were the problems of philosophy.<sup>1</sup> It simply insists that there is an irresistible and universal belief in the independent existence of an external world, or that it is contrary to common-sense to deny the notion of necessary causation. Of course this is no answer to Hume, who had stated—Principal Caird called him the *advocatus diaboli* in the court of Reason—the doubts of reason. It is simply an appeal to dogmatic reiteration of a fact, while it is that fact that philosophy is called upon to explain. But in following Hume, and then from where he left off seeking to travel with Kant and Hegel, I am passing over unacknowledged an earlier debt. I was, in my early days, beholden to Ferrier's *Institutes of Metaphysics*. I can say so much from memory, although I would be puzzled if I were asked to describe the purport of his work. I remember, however, an illustration he gave of futility, which was probably applied to the vain efforts of Reid and his school—I am not sure that it was not borrowed from the Greek. He likened something to the 'milking of a he-goat into a sieve.' In that case nothing comes, and even that you can't catch.

But from Berkeley and Hume I went, as I say, to Germany, partly under the guidance of Professor

<sup>1</sup> It was Novalis that spoke of Spinoza as 'the God-intoxicated man,' and that is a better condition than that of Dr. Johnson, who kicked a stone and thought he had proved the existence of an external material world. The man who has never questioned the domineering senses, who rests in such certitudes as these give him, is an outcast from philosophy, which tries to attain to the meaning of the unity of a universe which can only be reconciled in mind and, as Spinoza believed, in God.

Calderwood's edition of the *Metaphysics of Kant*, partly with the assistance of Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, and largely with the help of Dr. Hutchinson Stirling's *Secret of Hegel*, and so got deeper and deeper into the labyrinth. But as when one is in a tunnel, however dark, if it is straight you can see the day at the farther end, so I thought I saw a little hole of light at the end of the labyrinth.

Men's finger-prints are irrefragable evidence of identity. A man's face may change. Mistakes have frequently been made in hasty recognitions. But the seal manual of a man's thumb is not mistakable. So it is with God's finger-prints in the universe. They are unmistakable, and it is the business of philosophy to decipher these marks and to find a unity in a diverse universe, in the marks of the Potter's thumb that fashioned it.

With this small light guiding me I plodded on, writing now on the Method of the Study of Mind (1870), now on Berkeley (1871), on Hegelian Law, Mathematics, and Physiology (1873), on the Philosophy of Law (1874), until the time came to devote myself to what Carlyle called, in a letter to me, 'real work'; and then, alas, I had to write, as I said, upon Borough Extension, Contract Property and Penalty, 'Rating' and Railways. Still, before I leave Philosophy, let me recall Dr. James Hutchinson Stirling. I knew him in Edinburgh before I went to London. He was a native of Glasgow, educated there, practised as a doctor, and lived for some time in Germany. His *Secret of Hegel* was the book which first brought him into considerable prominence. As I remember him, he was a man of middle height, with a shrewd face, and a little unkempt in his dress, as perhaps a philosopher should be. His utterance was

not glib but weighty. I have a letter from him of which I was very proud at the time :

LAVEROCK BANK, EDINBURGH,  
August 15, 1872.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have just returned to my own room from a descent to put into the hands of my wife your critique on my Lectures, with the words : ‘There, that is worth reading ; that is the first word of sense that has yet been written on the whole business.’ I have read your paper with great care, and as much pleasure. I find your intelligence complete, and that is a very great point, for you will not find in Germany any understanding of the notion as you understand it. At least I know of no such expression of any such. The best *assonance*, and it is hardly more, I have ever seen in Germany to my own views occurs in what I have translated (in the Lectures) from Lassalle. Your strictures too—coming from you—I am very grateful for, and I will look into the matter of them most narrowly. I fear, however, that you yourself will have to share my experience here. You yourself understand all that about the universal, particular, and singular, and every pertinent word is seen clear—nevertheless, you yourself, *for them*, will have to hear of ‘obscurity.’ You tempt me to be extravagant in speech. I must forcibly control myself and simply thank you. I shall read your critique again and yet again, I am sure, only with increase, not only of thankfulness but of advantage.—Yours very truly, J. H. STIRLING.

Since re-reading this far too complimentary letter—which made me at the time think I was a philosopher—I have really been curious to see the critique which got, even if it did not merit it, such a high encomium. But, alas, I have not seen it from that day to this.

But I have confessed that, after 1873, I returned to the beaten track. I remember the story of Johnny Head-in-Air, in *Struwwelpeter*, who walked along looking up at the swallows flying, and went souse into the canal amongst the fishes. Since these pleasant

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excursions in the labyrinth, I have kept my eyes more on the ground and perhaps less on the swallows. But although the 'main chance,' as the Scotch call it, has made me too busy to write, I have read from time to time the later excursions into philosophy by William James, Bergson, Eucken, and others, and I am still convinced that the perhaps extravagant ambitions of youth are a better asset than the sluggish content which besots men who aim at nothing but the success of popularity or the rich rewards of a treadmill existence.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE METEMPSYCHOSIS OF IDEAS

Diaries—Men who have something to report—‘Words of great men’ words that stick to you—Repetitions in literature—Metempsychosis of ideas—Drummond, Chaucer, Babo, and Tennyson—Shakespeare and Shelley—‘Fools rush in’—Fichte and Burns—Landor and Disraeli—Drummond, Shelley, and George Herbert—Milton and Goethe—George Eliot and Goldsmith—Pascal and Novalis—Napoleon and Longfellow—Petrarch and Disraeli—Pascal, Lessing, and Richter—Ben Jonson and Sterne—Sir Thomas Browne and Goethe—Congreve, Richter, and Tennyson—Hugo and Owen Meredith—Shakespeare, Milton, Schiller, and Fitzgerald—Burke and Carlyle—Sir Walter Raleigh and the Marquis of Montrose—Helvetius and Lilley—Burns and Ben Jonson—Wycherley, Sterne, and Burns—Emerson and A. Smith—Hare and Tennyson—Shakespeare, Shelley, and Tennyson—Shakespeare and Shelley—Richter and Carlyle—Fichte and Arnold—Fichte, Hume, Goethe, and Eucken—Burns and Omar Khayyam—Baxter and Landor.

SOME idle men write diaries and put in them the futile record of empty days, for the busy man has no time to be his own amanuensis of his daily biography, and as a fact perhaps it is only the busy men who have anything worth reporting in that itinerary of the days. But the fate of diaries is not unlike that of human beings. They die a natural death when the writer tires of them, or perhaps an unnatural death when the author at last discovers that he has nothing to put in them to keep them alive. I have never had time to devote to the service of such paper memories of the hours, or to become—to pervert Morris’s line—‘the idle jotter of an empty day.’ But at one time I had a book in which, in a desultory

way, I put down 'words of great men' which laid hold of memory like a burr, and might be useful when one was bankrupt of one's own literary resources and one had to borrow from the dead, or the living. My quotation book was not very successful, for that sort of thing requires more reading and more leisure than a busy man can give to literature. Still in these random pages I find a heading which may not be uninteresting to some readers. They say history does not repeat itself, but literature certainly does, and the heading in the old book was intended to prove that there is nothing new under the sun. I called the chapter the 'Metempsychosis of Ideas,' and here are some of the resurrections or repetitions which I noted quite casually. Don't suppose I am accusing any one of plagiarism, for I think it quite natural that minds produced in a similar mould should produce almost identical bullets.

Thus Drummond of Hawthornden said :

'Sith passed pleasure doubles but new woe.'

Chaucer, in *Troilus and Cressida*, says :

'No greater grief than the remembered days  
Of joy, when misery is at hand.'

'The greatest of all misfortunes is the recollection of former prosperity,' said Babo, in *Dagobert*. And Tennyson, coming late, assured us :

'For the sorrow's crown of sorrows  
Is remembering happier things.'

Shakespeare, as we all know, made Lear sing :

'Blow, blow, thou winter wind.  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude.'

Shelley, in his *St. Irvyne* (chap. vii.), has it : 'Is the blast so pitiless as ingratitude and selfishness ? Ah, no ; it is unkind indeed, but not so unkind as that.'

We have been taught that :

‘Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.’

But Thucydides, quoted by Pliny, said: ‘Folly gives confidence, while thoughtfulness produces hesitation.’

Fichte, in his *Vocation of the Scholar*, said that ‘not the station itself, but the worthy fulfilment of its duties, does honour to a man.’ Robert Burns, with a peasant’s fine pride, said: ‘I do not intend to borrow honour from my profession.’

Walter Savage Landor, in his *Southey and Porson*, says: ‘Those who have failed as painters turn picture-cleaners, those who have failed as writers become reviewers.’ Mr. Disraeli observed with some bitterness: ‘Critics are those who have failed in literature and art.’

The likeness of Death and Sleep would strike the most superficial observer, and has been almost a commonplace in poetry.

Drummond of Hawthornden, in *Madrigal*, says :

‘If death sleep’s brother be.’

Shelley, in *Queen Mab*, speaks of :

‘Death and his brother sleep.’

And George Herbert, who is quoted by Sir Walter Scott in *Woodstock*, chap. vi., says: ‘Sleep steals on us even like his brother death.’

Milton observed that ‘those who would write heroic poems must live heroic lives.’ And Goethe, according to Eckermann in his *Conversations*, said: ‘If any would write in a noble style, let him first possess a noble soul.’

In the excellent first chapters of *Felix Holt, the Radical*, George Eliot speaks of our hedgerows, the pride of England, as 'the liberal homes of unmarketable beauty,' and so much pleased was she with the idea that in *Theophrastus Such* she repeats it, talking of 'hedgerows reckless of utility.' But Goldsmith, in the *Deserted Village*, had written two anticipating lines:

' Beside yon straggling fence which skirts the way,  
With blossomed furze, unprofitably gay.'

Pascal had a thought. 'But I thought,' he says, 'I should find many companions in the study of mankind, which is the true and proper study of man.' But Novalis told us, not remembering we had heard it before, that:

' The proper study of mankind is man.'

Longfellow's 'Footprints in the sands of time' had been anticipated by Napoleon.

According to Petrarch, 'We pass the first years of our life in the shades of ignorance, the succeeding ones in pain, and the latter part in grief and remorse, and the whole in error.' Mr. Disraeli is credited with observing that 'Youth is a blunder, manhood a struggle, old age a regret.' A fairly accurate translation.

We have it: 'It is the contest that delights us, and not the victory. It is the same in play, the same in the search for truth' (Pascal). 'Did the Almighty,' says Lessing, 'holding in His right hand Truth, and in His left hand Search for Truth, deign to tender me the one I might prefer—in all humility, but with-

out hesitation, I would request Search for Truth.' And Jean Paul Richter tells us : ' It is not the goal, but the course that makes us happy.'

It gets tedious, but let me remind you that Ben Jonson was the first to remark : ' Fear to do base unworthy things is valour. If they be done to us, to suffer them is valour too.' And Sterne was second when he made one of his puppets say : ' I hope I fear nothing but the doing of a wrong thing.'

Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Religio Medici*, sec. vii., says : ' I can hardly think that there was ever any one scared into heaven ; they go the straightest way to heaven who would serve God without a Hell.' And Goethe, in *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*, says : ' No religion that grounds itself on fear is regarded among us.'

Congreve, in *The Way of the World*, tells us : ' But say what you will, 'tis better to be left than never to have loved'—(Act ii. sc. i). Jean Paul Richter, in speaking of Love and Friendship, assures us that he who has never sought either is better than he who has lost both,' which is a contradiction. Tennyson, however, by repetition, corroborates Congreve, for in *In Memoriam* he says :

‘ ‘Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all.’

‘ The great do what they will,  
The small do what they can,’

says Victor Hugo in *L'Homme qui Rit*.

‘ Genius does what it must,  
Talent does what it can,’

says Lord Lytton (Owen Meredith).

‘There is no heaven or hell in all the earth, but thinking makes it so.’

*Hamlet.*

‘The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell or hell of heaven.’

*Paradise Lost*, Book I.

‘I myself am my heaven or my hell.’

*SCHILLER’s Robbers*, Act iv.

‘I sent my soul, through the invisible,  
Some letter of that after-life to spell,

And after many days my soul returned

And said, Behold myself am Heaven and Hell.’

*Omar Khayyam.*

Burke, in his *Reflections*, says: ‘Their purpose everywhere seems to have been to evade and slip aside from difficulty. This it has been the glory of the great masters in all arts to confront and overcome; and when they had overcome the first difficulty, to turn it into an instrument of new conquests over new difficulties.’ Carlyle, in *Past and Present*, says: ‘Not a difficulty but can transform itself into a triumph.’

Here, however, is an instance of curious coincidence. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote the night before he was beheaded:

‘But from this earth, this grave, this dust,  
The Lord will raise me up, I trust.’

The Marquis of Montrose wrote the day before his execution (‘Last words and dying confession,’ as the street-criers used to shout):

‘I’m hopeful thou ’lt recover once my dust,  
And confident thou ’lt raise me with the just.’

Helvetius told us that ‘in order to love mankind we must not expect too much from them’; and Mr. Lilley, in his *Shibboleths*, tells us much the same thing in much the same words: ‘The best way to keep on good terms with human nature is to expect little from it.’

Burns's immortal :

'The best laid schemes of mice and men  
Gang aft agley,'

had been put fairly well by Ben Jonson in *Volpone*, at the end of Act iii. :

'But fortune can at any time o'erthrow  
The projects of a hundred learned clerks.'

Wycherley, in *The Plain Dealer*, Act i. sc. 1 (an adaptation of Molière's *Le Misanthrope*), says : 'I weigh the man and not his title : 'tis not the king's stamp can make the metal better or heavier.' Sterne, in *Tristram Shandy*, has it that 'Honours, like impressions upon coins, may give an ideal and local value to a bit of base metal, but gold and silver will pass all the world over without any other recommendations than their own weight.' Burns packed up the same idea into a more portable line :

'The rank is but the guinea-stamp ;  
The man's the gowd, for a' that.'

Emerson pronounced Swedenborg 'a rare and opulent soul.' Alexander Smith, in his *Life's Drama*, speaks of an 'opulent soul' too.

Hare tells us, in his *Guesses at Truth*, that 'the most mischievous of liars are those that keep on the verge of truth.' And Tennyson, in *The Grandmother*, informs us, as if it were something new :

'For a lie that is half the truth  
Is ever the worst of lies.'

'Here was thy father's bed, here in my breast.  
Thou art the next of blood, and 'tis thy right,  
So in this hollow cradle take thy rest.'

My throbbing heart will rock thee day and night.'

SHAKESPEARE, *Venus and Adonis*.

‘Dream, sleep. This pale bosom thy cradle and bed,  
Will it rock thee not, infant, ‘tis beating with dread.’  
SHELLEY, *A Vision of the Sea*.

‘Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.’  
TENNYSON’S *Swallow*.

Of course a good many of these poetical observations were very obvious, and might have perhaps occurred to any poet, but when once the obvious has been adequately expressed, the after-poet should avoid going over beaten ground. Thus it seems quite probable that the snuffing out of a life by murder should be likened to the extinguishing of a lamp or candle. The thought may have occurred to the first rushlight-burner, but Shelley ought to have remembered when he put it into words that he had been forestalled by Shakespeare in *Othello*. Shakespeare wrote :

[Light burning.]

‘If I quench thee, thou flaming minister!  
I can again thy former life restore,  
Should I repent me: but once put out thy light,  
Thou cunningest pattern of excellent nature,  
I know not where is that Promethean flame  
That can thy light relume.’ (Act v. sc. 2.)

But we find Giacomo in the *Cenci*:

[Lighting lamp.]

‘And yet, once quenched, I cannot thus relume  
My father’s life.’ (Act i. sc. 2.)

But here is a thought which was in Jean Paul Richter’s head when he wrote *Titan*: ‘I will in the sea of this world rise, like a living man by swimming, not like a drowned man by corruption.’ But Carlyle must have forgotten where he got the idea when, in *Past and Present*, Book iii. chap. v., he wrote : ‘Not by levity of floating, but by stubborn force of swimming, thou shalt make thy way.’

Fichte tells you to 'Create within you the spirit of duty, and you will know God.' Thomas Arnold did not better it when he said : 'Begin by regarding everything from a moral point of view, and you will end by believing in God.'

One more quotation from these high quarters. Fichte, in his *Vocation of the Scholar*, wisely says : 'Be not overcome by pain, but overcome it with action.' Hume, in his *Inquiry*, says : 'The great subverter of Pyrrhonism, or the excessive principles of scepticism, is action and employment and the occupations of a common life.' And Goethe tells us : 'Doubt of any sort can only be removed by action.'<sup>1</sup>

I have many other records of the same sort of literary coincidences. Burns wrote :

'Or were I in the wildest waste,  
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,  
The desert were a paradise  
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.'

And Fitzgerald wrote :

'A flask of wine,  
[which Burns did not mention]  
a book of verse, and thou  
Beside me singing in the wilderness,  
And wilderness is Paradise enow.'

*Omar Khayyam.*

These, then, are instances of men who tried to say things admirably, and who hit upon a form of

<sup>1</sup> These quotations are in effect an anticipation of Eucken's *Activism*, his theory being that 'Doubt is not cured by meditation, but by action.' The pragmatists make truth depend on usefulness to, or helpfulness for, life. Eucken, however, thinks that truth is truth—not because a certain thing is useful is it true. Truth, reality, is independent of our experience of it, and truth comes to us intuitively through a life of action.

expression closely resembling the similar folds in which a past master had draped his idea. And I will finish by quoting the twice-enforced advice. 'The plainest words are,' says Baxter, 'the most profitable oratory in the weightiest matters.' 'Never try,' says Walter Savage Landor, who always said things admirably, 'never try to say things admirably, try only to say them plainly.'

## CHAPTER V

### READING

A voracious reader—Was read to—*Monte Cristo*—Miss Ferrier's novels—*Sandford and Merton*—Dr. Barlow's advice—*Robinson Crusoe*—Boys' books of to-day—*Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*—*Swiss Family Robinson*—Defoe's *Journal of the Plague*—Plutarch's *Lives*—Dumas' *Three Musketeers*, etc.—Scott's *Antiquary*—*Don Quixote*—*Gil Blas*—Goethe's plays—Schiller's *Piccolomini* and *Wallenstein*—Science—Brewster's *More Worlds than One*—Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*—Proctor and Turner—The 'how' and the 'why' of life—*The National Encyclopædia*, 'Manchester Lectures'—History—Lingard, Hume, Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle—Fiction—*Notre Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables*—*Wilhelm Meister*—Dickens and Thackeray—Goethe and Schiller—*Pickwick*—*Esmond*—*Vanity Fair*—Emerson's *Traits*—De Quincey (English opium-eater)—Ruskin—Mr. Carlyle on De Quincey—De Quincey and his publishers—Carlyle and Emerson—Bulwer-Lytton—*The Caxtons* and *Coming Race*—His plays—*The Lady of Lyons*—Money—Letter from Lord Lytton—*Roderick Random*—Smollett—*Letters from France and Italy*—*Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*—Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot—*Scenes of Clerical Life*—Mrs. Browning and *Aurora Leigh*—George Meredith.

I WAS a voracious reader even before I could read. I pressed a too kind grandmother into my service, and it was through her that I became acquainted with Dumas' *Monte Cristo*, and other works like the *Castle of Otranto*, which took my young breath away. I think it was in the same way that I became a reader of Miss Ferrier's *Inheritance* and *Destiny*, and with Maria Edgeworth's stories, or some of them. But the acquaintance with such excellent, although dry literature was only slight, for the question what you

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get out of a book depends upon the amount of knowledge which you bring to the high tryst.

There is another thought to be remembered in relation to one's recollections of books read, or read long ago, and that is that our old judgments would mostly be reversed if the matter was reheard in the Court of Appeal of to-day.

But even if the books I was thus early admitted into did not give me all they might have done, they gave me much, and have left some valuable memories with me. It was in this way, through the spectacled eyes of my grandmother, that I came to know some poor veins of literature as well as some richer lodes. For example, I listened to *Sandford and Merton*, and all I remember of that possibly wholesome book was the excellent advice of Dr. Barlow to 'eat when you are hungry and drink when you are dry.' But far better than any I listened to *Robinson Crusoe*. The last was indelible, and I can see the eyes of the goat looking at *Robinson Crusoe* in the cave, the discovery of the footprints in the sand, even Friday's suggestion to dig up the bodies of the slain, and the rest, even now. There are many books, I dare say, nowadays making similar impressions on the adventure-loving minds of boys, such as *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* and others, but there were fewer in the old days. Still, after all, we were not in poverty when we had *Robinson Crusoe*. Afterwards, when I could read for myself, having found so much in Defoe, I read *Swiss Family Robinson*, another desert-island book, but remember little of it except that the shipwrecked family seemed to have had all the luxuries of life upon their desert island. But Defoe was a find, when I could read; his pages were full of delight, some of them of excitement. I read the *Journal of the*

*Plague*, by this Hogarth of literature, which was fiction, but was truer than most history; *Captain Singleton*; and I even read some of his works which would not have been tolerated in my hands had their contents been appreciated, and which may, for anything I know, be omitted from a polite list of his works. But although these were not his best, the reading of them did me no serious harm, and even with a careful balance-sheet, with *Crusoe* on one side of the account, I am still much his debtor.

It would be tedious to mention the books which, when I could read for myself, I assimilated.<sup>1</sup> Dumas' *Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After*, and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* were some of the early ministrants to my amusement. *Ivanhoe*, of course, was an early favourite, although even in those young days I think I liked *The Antiquary* better—at any rate I do now. *Don Quixote* I read even before I could fully understand that wonderful book, and after *Don Quixote* I read Cervantes' Exemplary Novels. I wanted to know something of the great masters of all countries; and having heard of *Lesage*, I got and read *Gil Blas* and *Le Diable boiteux*.

It was Sir John Lubbock who wrote a list of the one hundred best books, but for every man the best books differ. I was still quite young when I read Goethe's plays (in English)—*Iphigenie*, *Torquato Tasso*, and *Egmont*, and afterwards I read Schiller's *Piccolomini* and *Wallenstein* (I think translated by Coleridge). I once took the trouble to compare his translation with the translation of the same scenes which Carlyle has in one of his books, and I reluct-

<sup>1</sup> There is one book which, if not a great classic, stands very high among my estimate of books—Plutarch's *Lives*. Some one called that book the 'Westminster Abbey of antiquity,' and I have spent much time among the tombs.

antly came to the conclusion that Coleridge's was the better of the two.

But it was not by any means all fiction and plays that was my diet in these interested days. I had curiosity not only to know the inside of books, but to know the inside of things, and the way they work. The latter is the scientific curiosity which makes men desire to know the 'how' and 'why' of things. It may even be the 'how' and 'why' of the stars. I remember I quite early read Brewster's *More Worlds than One*, Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*, and more recently I have read with pleasure Proctor's *Other Worlds than Ours*, and only the other day Professor Turner's children's lectures at the Royal Institution, *A Voyage through Space*. But the 'how' and the 'why' of life interested me as much as the stars, and I soon wanted to know about the anatomy of man and the physiology of his 'works.' You remember the child, who was asked what she understood by 'the devil and all his works,' explained that it was 'the devil and his inside.' Well, the 'works' interested me. I took a watch to pieces in my youth and learned how the mainspring worked, but I could not put it together again, and the thing remained a wreck of cog-wheels, balances, and dials. Perhaps I understood better the meaning of analysis and synthesis after that disastrous investigation.

But one of the books that I explored for the satisfaction of my gnawing curiosity was an encyclopædia, called, if I remember aright, *The National Encyclopædia*, and I had a great find in what were called 'Manchester Science Lectures,' which told me through Roscoe about Chemistry, through Huggens about Spectrum Analysis, through Huxley about Coral Reefs, through Lockyer about the Sun, through Abel

about Gun-cotton, and a dozen other matters. So far as I remember, I read in these days very little history. I think I was set on one occasion, as a sort of educational punishment, to read Lingard, and I had been interested in the students' Hume, which I read at school. But for Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, for Macaulay's *England*, for Carlyle's *French Revolution* —a panorama more than a history—or his *Frederick*, which I have not finished even now, and for bits of Grote, I had to wait many years.

The way that fiction in such works pretended to be something better, rather repelled me from these books in the buckram of pride in those earlier days of my hours in a library. But *Notre Dame de Paris*, *Les Misérables*, and even Hugo's forgotten *Hans of Islande*, fascinated me then, and the two first could fascinate me again now. I knew *Wilhelm Meister* through Carlyle, and thought it dull.

But, of course, Dickens early made an appeal to me as a reader. I think *Martin Chuzzlewit* must have been a book read aloud in nursery evenings, but I early read *Oliver Twist* and his life of *Grimaldi* for myself. *Bleak House* came later. But his Christmas stories, which were the nicest things he wrote, and the Christmas numbers of *Household Words* and *Pickwick*, these were my playfellows. It was the time when the great literary problem was discussed between people who pretended to taste, which was the greater novelist, Dickens or Thackeray. There had been similar discussions in Germany over the merits and greatness of Goethe and Schiller, and I think it was one of these great men who wisely deprecated the strife and observed that the people should be grateful because they had both. The comparison between Dickens and Thackeray was a

very futile matter, but it served for the pabulum of conversations illuminated by large 'Ohs!' The two men were very different. Thackeray was a lesser Fielding. Dickens was not so much a great novelist as an amusing humorist. He didn't understand character as Thackeray did, but he understood caricature a great deal better. There were sore sides in all his books but his pathos was very wooden, and some, or most, of his puppets impossible. Even the members of the Pickwick Club, or Sam Weller, were not real. Smallweed and a hundred others of his people never existed, nor could have existed, out of the pages of his magic pen. But Thackeray for the most part did not write farces. His *Esmond* impressed me much. *Vanity Fair* is a remarkable book, and so were many of his others that delighted our young days ; but when, in Emerson's *English Traits*, I found these words :

' Dickens, with preternatural apprehension of the language, the manners, and the varieties of street life, with pathos and laughter, with patriotic and still enlarging generosity writes London Tracts. He is a painter of English details, like Hogarth ; local and temporary in his tints and style, local in his aims. Thackeray finds that God has made no allowance for the poor thing in His universe, more's the pity he thinks, but it is not for us to be wiser, so we must renounce ideals and accept London ' —

I felt that he was not far wrong in his estimate of these two men who in my youth were regarded as giants, but were somewhere between the huge bulk of a Goliath and the puniness of a pygmy.

There was also at that time some learned dispute between people of supposed taste as to whether the style of De Quincey (the English opium-eater) or Ruskin was the better. It was a nice bone to sharpen wits upon. But the final fact is that they both wrote

excellent English, and that their styles differed as much as the men differed, for, after all, style is the literary skin of the man. I early knew De Quincey's imaginative piece of morbid biography, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, but afterwards had more than a dipping acquaintance with his many volumes, *Selections Grave and Gay*. Much of what he wrote was for the time, and will not be accepted by the centuries. When we praise a man's style it is like criticising the 'lines' of a ship; but however perfect they may be to the eye, the proof of the vessel is the sailing, and the proof of a book is its sailing too. And both Ruskin, in his great books—the *Stones of Venice*, *Modern Painters*, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and his more portable *Unto this Last*, *The Two Paths*, the *Political Economy of Art*, *Sesame and Lilies*, and *Fors Clavigera*—and De Quincey, in his fourteen or fifteen volumes, must be judged not by their present vogue but by their permanent value. Will they sail the centuries? De Quincey was spoken of by Carlyle as 'a bright ready and melodious talker, but in the end inconclusive and long-winded.' And Mrs. Carlyle said of him, 'What wouldn't one give to have him in a Box, and take him out to talk.'

My own view of both is that for all their melodiousness, they are in the end 'inconclusive and long-winded.'

The little man De Quincey once quarrelled—as many authors have—with his publishers. Indeed, it has been said that publishers 'are like the gods of the Valhalla and drink their wine out of other men's skulls.' And some other put-upon author quoted Scripture to his spiteful purpose, and said, 'Now Barabbas was a publisher.' But this dispute of De Quincey's was with the firm of Hogg and Co., who

published some of his works, and the little author nimbly said 'he thought the devil must have got into these Swine.'

But let me admit that although both Ruskin and De Quincey had my warm allegiance for a time—for all monarchs are only on temporary thrones—I became more naturalised after a time on that rugged country of Carlyle's prose, or on the calm, cold promontory of Emerson's crisp English. I had seen and in a sense known the author of *Sartor Resartus* from my early youth, and as a young man became an ardent reader of his gnarled prose. Here again some of the silly instituted comparisons between the great rough-hewn Scotsman and the carefully chiselled American, 'finished to the nails' as the Romans used to say of their good statues. But it was a feeble and futile comparison. They were both great men. But the one was fire and molten lava, the other ice and clear cold water. Still, as I say, their works were sceptres over me for many years, and when perhaps my overdone admiration began to put on more sober hues, it was not without a sigh that I saw them, if I may say so, to some extent abdicate.

There is a story told of a Scotch minister that on his way to take the duty of a neighbour at a distance he lost the manuscript of his sermon. In the pulpit he explained that he had lost his sermon, and that therefore he could only speak the words to them that the Lord put in his mouth. 'But,' he added, 'I will be better provided in the afternoon!' This anecdote compares with that which tells of a critic who said that 'Emerson's prayer' in some church in Boston 'was the most eloquent prayer which had ever been addressed to a Boston audience.' But surely it was

a misdirected letter, although Jean Paul has well said that 'Prayer is a self-preached sermon.'

Of Bulwer I read much in my youth, *The Caxtons* and *What will He do with It?* with admiration. *The Coming Race* afterwards came in for its share of enthusiastic appreciation. I had seen two of his plays, *The Lady of Lyons* and *Money*, on the stage, and always remembered the little prologue to the latter:

'It's a very good world that we live in,  
To lend or to spend or to give in,  
But to beg or to borrow or get a man's own,  
'Tis the very worst world that ever was known.'

But although I thought him a fine gentleman, the phrase that Tennyson applied to him in *Punch*, 'The padded man that wears the stays,' sticks painfully in my memory. There was a note of artificiality about Bulwer Lytton which somehow the phrase, even if it were untrue as to the fact, seemed to indicate. But in 1871 I had not parted with my admiration for his works, and sent him a copy of one of *my novels*; and as I have struck a derogatory note with regard to his work, it is fair you should hear his opinion of mine. He wrote :

SIR,—I am much obliged by your courteous note and the book you have so kindly sent me. In the latter, there appears to me much evidence of a talent superior to the general run of most writers—but, speaking frankly, the style adopted is not that which to my judgment belongs to narrative, and if you wish to do yourself justice I think you should study simpler modes of expressing yourself.

LYTTON.

TORQUAY, Feby. 22, 1871.

I early read *Roderick Random* and found good Scotch grit in it, but although I addressed myself to *Humphry Clinker* I cannot honestly say that I

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read it. I think of all Smollett's books I like his *Letters from France and Italy* the best. Of course I read *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* early, and with real zest, but Fielding's last journey, written when he was on his way to Portugal to die and be buried, was a disappointment and, as a book of travel, is far inferior to Smollett's *Letters*.

I do not know that I have said enough to show that I was a voracious reader, but if need were I could number a hundred other favourites. The first of Jane Austen's books I read was *Mansfield Park*, but afterwards *Emma* and the others came in their prim ability to take a permanent place on the shelves of memory. But then there came two other women of a very different type from Jane Austen—Charlotte Brontë with her fire under a bushel, and George Eliot with a man's brain, a woman's body, and a head like a horse's. *Jane Eyre* laid hold of me. And *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Silas Marner* have got more of my heart than *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. The *Mill on the Floss* and *Adam Bede* were in their way excellent, but *Felix Holt* was not up to her own high-water mark, and *Theophrastus Such* was rather a carping cleverness.

When I first read *Aurora Leigh* I thought Mrs. Browning greater than her husband, but judgements have to be reversed, as I said, with further evidence, and although I much admire her poetry, and could still weep over *Bertha in the Lane*, I have come to regard her in comparison with Robert Browning as 'moonlight is to sunlight, or as water is to wine.' I only met Robert Browning once, at dinner in Queen Anne Street, and a casual word or two before the other guests arrived passed between us. I remember now how, by his pressgang

of a mind, he forced a reluctant word into his service and made it express exactly what he wanted to say. I saw him often enough at the Athenæum Club, but I was too shy to renew such a very casual acquaintance.

But in my reading I have come to our modern masters, beginning with George Meredith, whose dazzling pages demand an attention and strained admiration which gets a little painful. But these moderns deserve some separate notice, for it is the present-day writers whose books are read and the old writers are only praised.

Who was it said :

‘ Klopstock is praised by young and old,  
But few have read his verses o'er.  
I 'm willing to be less extolled  
If I am read a little more.’

## CHAPTER VI

### MRS. LEO HUNTER

Her Sunday evenings—Notables and half-notables—A museum of notoriety—‘Specimen men’—Professor Clifford—Mr. Alfred Cock, Q.C.—Some whose names have escaped—Professor Goldwin Smith—Grant Allen—Sir John Burdon Sanderson—‘The backs.’

I WILL not say a word against a Mrs. Leo Hunter who lived in H— Street, and who every Sunday evening filled her drawing-rooms with every notable person she could lay her hands on. Her house was on these occasions a museum of notoriety. Distinction of any sort was an introduction to her hospitalities. She crowded her rooms with the illustrious or semi-illustrious, and would have had even the more illustrious or supermen if she could have got them. Her husband was less well known than she was. I understood that, with the usual ability of his race, he had made money in one of the large provincial towns in some sort of commerce or industry. I never knew what his occupation had been, but it was evidently an entirely different trade from that of his little, very plump, kind wife, who thus traded on Sundays in Specialities. How I ever came to be a ‘specimen man,’ if I may adapt one of Walt Whitman’s phrases, I never knew, but my modesty tells me I never deserved it. Her Sunday-evening reception was preceded by what Sir Henry Thompson used to call an ‘octave dinner,’ and the first time

I had the honour of dining with Mrs. Leo Hunter, I remember Professor Clifford, the Professor of Applied Mathematics at University College, and Mrs. Clifford (since distinguished as an able novelist and playwright) were among the guests. Clifford had got a great reputation for having passed second in the Mathematical Tripos, and for his pronounced atheism—a negative creed which a man is quite entitled to hold, but which he too often offensively flourishes.

I do not remember any of the conversation, and perhaps it is lucky that we can forget, for otherwise what a rubbish-heap memory would be; but from what I have seen of Mrs. Clifford's books, I regret now that I have no memory of what we talked about. On the same occasion Mr. Alfred Cock, Q.C., was also one of the privileged dinner guests. He was a man cast in a rough mould, large and dark-complexioned, with an aggressive manner which may have stood him in good stead in the courts he practised in. He had some pretensions to taste, which he showed by his collection of curios; these did not, on his too early death, realise the sums of money which were expected of them, and that threw a posthumous blight on his reputation as a connoisseur. There were others whose names I may not have caught, or may have forgotten: a gentleman, the muscles of whose face jerked up his moustache, and that did for his smile; a lady who had a face which seemed to have been made in putty, and looked as if some one had pulled her nose out while it was soft and pulled her cheeks out with it—it was nose or nothing in her case. I dare say they were both noted for something quite apart from these peculiarities.

It was in the same hospitable house that I made

the acquaintance—it was only an acquaintance of ten minutes at most—with Mr. Goldwin Smith, who was upon that occasion a returned visitor from Canada, where for some eccentric reason he had settled. That a Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford should emigrate to Toronto, where he edited a Canadian 'Monthly,' seemed to me then—regarding London as I did as the centre of the universe—an eccentricity almost amounting to a folly. But in my ten minutes on Mrs. Leo Hunter's sofa I detected no facts indicating insanity in the Professor. But what can two men do with ten minutes? One of my grudging memories of that plump hostess is that she was perhaps too anxious to introduce her captures one to another, and after an introduction, in terms which would make modesty as red as a boiled lobster, she would allow you a few minutes to settle all the questions of the universe, and then, like a hospitable policeman, would 'move you on' to intercourse with another of her celebrities. It is in this way that I have nothing but a dissolving view of Goldwin Smith's long limbs and sprawling attitude, and the exchange of some commonplaces which told me nothing of the man, and possibly preserved my careful incognito.

It was on another occasion that, in the same review of the exceptionals of London literary society, Mrs. Leo Hunter made me known to Grant Allen, who even then, alas, had a cough which sounded like a knock on Death's door. I think he had written *The Woman Who Did*, but he himself, the more the pity of it, was the man that wouldn't do. His tuberculous condition was 'too many for him.' Disease is really a fight to get well. But although he fought, he was too early defeated.

I must have rubbed shoulders, at any rate, with many other persons in H—— Street that it would have been pleasant even to come to closer quarters with than those defensive elbows, but I forget them now. I think it was here, and only once, that I met Sir John Burdon Sanderson, great, as I believe, on the 'functions of living tissue,' himself a long ungainly lath of living tissue with an incisive knife of a face ; but what we talked about I do not remember, if we talked at all, for great men like the monologue better than the dialogue, and I hope I did not interrupt him. Still, although I question whether crowds of geniuses playing at 'General post' is Society, I have not ungratefully remembrances of Mrs. Leo Hunter for her kindnesses, if I smiled at her interest in the interesting. It was ungenerously said of her that, when she was asked after a visit to Cambridge whether she had seen 'the backs,' she said, 'Yes, they are coming to me on Sunday evening.'

But I believe that the good lady gave up the pursuit of 'big game,' and I myself am of opinion that that is a game which is not worth the candle.

## CHAPTER VII

### GEOLOGY

Lyell's *Principles of Geology*—Magic and creation—The bursting of a peat-moss—Water-supply—Degradation of the earth by water—Modern Geology—Dr. James Hutton's *Theory of the Earth*—His tea-service—Uniformitarianism—Hutton's contribution to Geology—William Smith and organic remains—Sir Archibald Geikie—Buckle's *History of Civilisation*—Coincidences—Hutton and Smith—Adams and Leverrier—Darwin and Wallace—The catastrophic Ice-age—Rate of denudation—Geologic time—Lord Kelvin—Paley's 'Design'—Weismann—Professor Tait—Lord Salisbury's Presidential Address—Lord Kelvin and Natural Selection—Paley's 'watch.'

ONE of the most delightful works I ever read was Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, or, to give it its explanatory title, 'Being an attempt to explain the former changes of the earth's surface by causes now in action.' Until then I had been brought up in the belief that magic had a good deal to do with the creation of the world, in bringing about the changes which had taken place in its ruggedly sculptured features, and that all these had happened in six thousand years. But this book took the trickery out of the universe, and explained that if we used our eyes and saw what was going on now, we could explain by the doings of to-day the events of all the innumerable yesterdays. I remember now the deep impression the *Principles* made on me; and, if I remember aright, it was from Lyell that I learned about that peculiar phenomenon, the 'bursting of a

peat-moss' (or bog), which I used as an incident in one of my earliest attempts to write fiction. I had in after life, in relation to the questions of 'water-supply to towns,' to know, or pretend to know, a good deal about Geology and the degradation of the earth's surface by water-streams which, as the poet has it,

'Sing for centuries about their work of valley-making' ;

but I had, in an obscure way, a connection with the founder of Modern Geology. I was named after my uncle, John Hutton Balfour, the Professor of Botany in the University of Edinburgh, and he got his second Christian name from James Hutton, the distinguished author of the *Theory of the Earth*, who lived in a house, No. 3 St. John's Hill, Edinburgh, which was afterwards occupied by Professor Balfour's father. What the exact relational connection between Dr. James Hutton and the Balfours was I am unable now to say, and I have not troubled to investigate. But I know I am still in possession of Hutton's tea-service, consisting of really good oriental blue and white china. There are blue cocks on every cup, crowing, as they had a right to do, over the doctor's achievements. The teacups (or dishes, as they used to be called) are quite small, and the cock on them is cramped for room, but there is one large cup as big as a breakfast coffee-cup where chanticleer has space enough, and that has come down to me with the tradition that it was Dr. Hutton's own cup—which, if it is true, must throw a light upon the doctor's habits and also on his hospitalities.

But I am more concerned in what he did than in what he drank, and his achievement, brought to better light by the work of Playfair, was so consider-

able that one may be proud to recognise him, in some obscure way, as a connection.

It was Hutton who, in the first instance, sought in the changes now in progress on the earth's surface an explanation of those which occurred in older times. His doctrine was that every part of the surface of the continents from mountain-top to seashore is continually undergoing decay, and is thus slowly travelling to the sea. The floor of the sea may be elevated into new land, but again the little drops of water begin to nibble at it and continue the process of unceasing degradation. This explains how rivers dig out for themselves the channels in which they flow, and thus a system of valleys is constructed radiating from the water parting of a country, down which these indefatigable rivers run and carry their mosaics for the floor of the sea.

But Dr. Hutton saw that this war of attrition would eventually lead to the entire demolition of the dry land—a 'sea change' indeed—but he also saw that this sedate catastrophe is prevented by the operation of the underground forces whereby new continents are upheaved from the bed of the ocean—a veritable resurrection. It was thus, according to him, that nature kept the 'balance true' between the land and water on a habitable globe. His theory was further advanced by the fruitful generalisation of William Smith, who demonstrated that the stratified rocks of the west of England occur in definite sequence, and that each well-marked group of these can be discriminated from the others and identified after thousands of centuries by means of the organic remains, which were, as it were, pressed between the pages of the world rock-book. The contemporaneous discoveries of Hutton and Smith have been referred to

by Sir Archibald Geikie as a 'curious coincidence.' But these curious coincidences seem to have occurred again and again in the history of Science. The world was startled, and for a short time delighted, with Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, which was published in 1857 and which announced the remarkable discovery that statistics have 'thrown more light on human nature than all the sciences put together,' and that the conclusions founded on them 'rest on broad and tangible proofs accessible to the world which cannot be overturned or even impeached by any of the hypotheses with which the metaphysician and theologian have perplexed the study of past events.' What he proposed to do was to read the moral nature of man by means of arithmetic. Thus 'murder,' according to him, 'is committed with as much regularity and bears as uniform a relation to certain known circumstances as do the movements of the Tides and the rotation of the Seasons.' It is no use promulgating a law 'Thou shalt not kill.' There are two murders short this year, and these must be committed or Statistic is a liar. Murder is a product of the general condition of Society, and Palmers and Pritchards are not unnatural murderers, but are as natural and, I suppose, as welcome as the flowers in May.

But following in the footsteps of the great Buckle, and having regard to the coincidence I have been mentioning in the discoveries of Hutton and Smith, may we not formulate a law and say that great men are always born twins. In our own time we have the remarkable coincidence of the discovery of the law of Natural Selection at the same time by Darwin and Wallace; and in Astronomy in the last century, J.C. Adams, of Cambridge, by his calculations showed

that the observed irregularities in the movements of the planet Uranus may be accounted for by supposing the existence of an exterior body, the orbit of which is as follows—and then, in the dark, he had as it were his hand on 'Neptune.' But meanwhile Leverrier, in France, had begun to work at the same problem. He also thought there was a 'rat behind the arras,' and ended by pointing out the place where Neptune must be, and that was almost precisely the same place in the dark sky that Adams had pointed to. Here again, therefore, we have our scientific twins, and it would almost seem as if all our stars in Science were double stars.

But to return to Hutton and Lyell and the 'Uniformetarians,' as they have been barbarously called. They had abolished catastrophes, but their theory got a shock when it was demonstrated that there had been an Ice-age. After this country had been the home of jungle, tree-ferns, and club-mosses—a perfect hothouse in which lions, hyænas, wild horses, and hippopotami roamed—winter set in with a vengeance, and an ice-cap extended from the Arctic regions into France. The blades of stone in a heft of ice began to polish and smooth the rocks of this country, and the marking of these tools can still be seen on our granite hills. And this age—in which reindeer, musk-ox, and mammoth took the place of the jungle beasts—continued over these islands, not for centuries, but for thousands of years. As for the time that it took to transform one country from a tropical jungle to a glacier, or for the time it takes to wear away hills and to turn them into sea-ooze, these calculations are the fairy-tales of science. It is, for instance, calculated that our rains take about seven hundred and fifty years to wear away a foot of the surface of the earth

and turn it into the raw material of the strata which contain the history of the world, and as the stratified masses of earth in their united thicknesses are not less than one hundred thousand feet, it is quite easy to determine, by the arithmetic of which Buckle thought so much, how long it took to form the sedimentary rocks of this crusty world.

There was at one time a very hot dispute—as to time—between two sets of scientific gentlemen. The question was as to the length of time it would take to develop a professor from an ascidian (or sea-squirt), and Lord Kelvin pointed out that the time to be allowed for that desirable evolution was not long enough. From the rate at which the earth was cooling now, and from the fact that life on this planet would be impossible if the temperature at the surface were fifty degrees Fahrenheit higher than it is at present, he only allowed one hundred million years—a considerable period—for the whole of the stupendous process, and Professor Tait cut down the period considerably and would only allow ten million years for the whole work of animal evolution. On the other hand, biologists did not desire to be confined to such narrow quarters; they wanted far more millions of years than this illiberally allowed them, and as Lord Salisbury said, 'Long cribbed and confined within the narrow bounds of the popular chronology, they have exulted wantonly in their new freedom. They have lavished their millions of years with the open hand of a prodigal heir indemnifying himself by present extravagance for the enforced self-denial of his youth.' And I believe these scientists are not yet reconciled as to the length of the tether, and that there are still a few hundred

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millions of years claimed by the one which are refused by the other.

When thieves fall out, it is said honest people get their own, but when what Ben Jonson calls 'learned cleeks' or what we call 'scientists' fall out, it is difficult to determine who is profited by the flying of their feathers. Thus there have been some terrific storms ever since Paley's time over the question of Spontaneous Evolution and Design.

Weismann, who contrary to Darwin denies the inheritance of acquired habits or developments, has yet accepted the general theory on these grounds. 'We accept Natural Selection,' he says, 'not because we are able to demonstrate the process in detail, not even because we can with more or less ease imagine it, but simply because it is the only possible explanation that we can conceive. We must assume Natural Selection to be the principle of the explanation of the metamorphosis—because all other apparent principles of explanation fail us—and it is inconceivable that there could yet be another capable of explaining the adaptation of the organic without assuming the help of the principle of design.'

These are rather curious words in the mouth of a scientist. He is not able to demonstrate Natural Selection, finds a difficulty even in imagining it, but he will swallow it rather than believe in a God in the universe. But as against his big assumption we can place the words of Lord Kelvin. 'I have always felt,' he said, 'that the hypothesis of Natural Selection does not contain the true theory of evolution, if evolution there has been, in biology. I feel profoundly convinced that the argument of design has been greatly too much lost sight of in recent zoological speculations. Overpoweringly strong

proofs of intelligent and benevolent design lie around us, and if ever perplexities, whether metaphysical or scientific, turn us away from them for a time, they come back upon us with irresistible force, showing to us through nature the influence of a free will, and teaching us that all living things depend on one everlasting Creator and Ruler.'

Thus we have it that Paley's 'watch,' which we thought had been broken and thrown away long ago, is back again, and ticking as loudly as ever.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TALK

Talking is literature—Carlyle a monarch of talk—Sydney Smith on Macaulay—Carlyle's description of Coleridge's talk—Hazlitt on Coleridge—A 'passive bucket'—Carlyle's own talk described—Did not converse but talked—Emerson's visit to Craigenputtock—Carlyle on *Rab and his Friends*—A specimen of his talk—Thomas Aird—Talker not a raconteur.

TALKING is the best literature. It is, although not strictly included in the word literature at all, better than what is written down. For all writing has been talking first. Sometimes, no doubt, it is talk to myself, that is muttering; sometimes it is talk to others, and that, if it is good, is oratory. In conversation we have flint and steel, and the sparks fly in the writing. And at the best you have in writings a camera-lucida rendering sunlight or stars. A man is at his brightest when he has an audience. There is a *mousse* about talk. Writing is still champagne, or at best sparkling wine decanted. Most great writers have been, or could have been, great talkers. Thus Carlyle was a monarch of talk. Sydney Smith said to Macaulay, who domineered in speech, that he would be sorry, when he (the Canon) was dead, that he had never heard him talk.

Carlyle naturally suffered when he met another talker as great as himself. In his *Life of John Sterling*, after giving a Turneresque picture of London from Mr. Gillman's house at Highgate, where Coleridge

drowsed, he gives us a portrait of the man worthy of Raeburn. ‘Here,’ he writes, ‘for hours would Coleridge talk concerning all conceivable and inconceivable things ; and liked nothing better than to have an intelligent or, failing that, even a silent patient human listener. He distinguished himself to all that ever heard him as at least the most surprising talker extant in this world. And to some small minority, by no means the most excellent.’ Now comes the portrait :

‘The good man, he was now getting old, towards sixty perhaps ; and gave you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings, a life heavy-laden, half-vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round and of massive weight, but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration ; confused pain looked mildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amicable, otherwise might be called flabby and irresolute ; expression of meekness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent and stooped attitude ; in walking he rather shuffled than decisively stept. A lady once remarked, he never could fix which side of the garden walk would suit him best, but continually shifted, in corkscrew fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring, and surely much-suffering man. His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted itself into a plaintive snuffle and singsong ; he spoke as if preaching—you would have said preaching—earnestly and also hopelessly the mightiest things. I still recollect his ‘object’ and ‘subject’ terms of continual recurrence in this Kantean province ; and how he sang or snuffled them into “omm-mjet” and “summ-mjet” with a kind of solemn shake or quaver as he rolled along. No talk in this century or in any other could be more surprising.’

And then Carlyle, having got his listeners, talks on of Coleridge’s talk through three or four of his rugged pages. He quotes John Sterling, who said, ‘Our inter-

view lasted for three hours, during which he (Coleridge) talked two and three-quarters,' and Hazlitt, who said of him, 'Excellent talker very—if you let him start from no premises and come to no conclusions.'

But his own complaint seems to be that he was treated as a 'passive bucket' and pumped into 'whether you consent or not,' which, he says, 'can in the long run be exhilarating to no creature how eloquent soever the flood of utterance that is descending. But if it be withal a confused unintelligible flood of utterance, threatening to submerge all known landmarks and thought and drown the world and you ! I have heard Coleridge talk, with eager musical energy, two stricken hours, his face radiant and moist, and communicate no meaning whatsoever to any individual of his hearers—certain of whom, I for one, still kept eagerly listening in hope ; the most had long before given up, and formed (if the room were large enough) secondary humming groups of their own,' and so on.

One can sympathise with Carlyle when he was treated as a 'passive bucket' when he wanted to be at the pump handle. But when he got hold of that instrument of deluge, he, if we can trust ear-witnesses, worked it with a will. Here is the view of the writer of his obituary notice, either in the *Daily News* or *Times*, I forget which, who knew him and had listened to him. 'Then,' he writes, 'he would pour out his wonderful talk, which seemed to be of immeasurable range and richness. The present writer has known him to talk about birds until one would have said he must have passed his life in the study of ornithology, until the next time he heard him discoursing about tea or coffee, words or myths—almost anything—when he would become aware that he was in the

presence of one who had explored every part of the world he lived in to the furthest point. Not less impressive than the matter was the manner of his wonderful talk. Sometimes his face would flame with wrath or earnestness which his subject kindled, and his listeners shrank as before a gathering storm, but it might be that some droll aspect of the case would suddenly catch his eye and the storm would burst in thunderous but not unmusical laughter, or still oftener some delicate or tender association would surprise his stormy path, and in a moment his voice would sink to the sweetness of a lute. The tobacco-pipe always seemed to be a sign of the inward workings of the sublime talker ; it would send out thick clouds or quiet blue curls as its master's stormy argument grew vehement or gentle ; but it was sure to go out at nearly every punctuation of his long sentences, and to have to be relighted many times in the course of the evening.' Who are the 'passive buckets' now, and where is the douche coming from, I wonder ?

There are some excellent specimens of Carlyle's 'talk' (I don't think he conversed), by an exceedingly able reporter, in Emerson's *English Traits* when he visited Carlyle at Craigenputtock. It is too well known to be quoted. But Emerson's sketch of the man is excellent : 'He was tall and gaunt, with a cliff-like brow, self-possessed, and holding his extraordinary powers of conversation in easy command ; clinging to his northern accent with evident relish, full of lively anecdotes, and with streaming humour which floated everything he looked upon.'

A writer in the *Scotsman*, under the heading 'Thomas Carlyle on Dr. Brown's *Rab and his Friends*,' refers to 'Carlyle's talk as richly worth reporting,'

and sets himself to be Boswell for the nonce and to report some criticisms which Carlyle made on that 'Dog Story' when he was in Edinburgh. The whole of this article, which was written in the 'eighties, I think, and is signed with the initials P. L., would be worth quoting but it is too long, and the interest in *Rab and his Friends* and *Horæ Subsecivæ* has passed away since then. Still, as there are so few of Carlyle's spoken words remaining, we quote the following passages from P. L.'s report, which deal perhaps with matters of more permanent interest:

'Have done with this *rabifying* talk, which could only be heard in such a parish-capital as Edinburgh. Long ago Edinburgh was made an intolerable hole for me. I was here when Scott's *Rob Roy* came out; and the hero who gives his name to the novel was forthwith canonised. The work was soon dramatised, and the city became Rob Roy's cave. Dull College Professors joined in the drawing-room chatter of young ladies about the hero, and compared Rob with the long-armed Ulysses, but doubted if Homer's hero could have tied his garters without stooping! It was agreed that Rob's escape, when he was bound to a horse and its rider, was more cleverly managed than that of Ulysses fixing himself under the belly of a sheep. I was present at a grim quarrel between the scientific Brewster and the philosophical Hamilton, about the virtues of the Highlanders—the quarrel growing out of talk about Rob Roy. Brewster, through his marriage with a relative of Macpherson, believed in Ossian, and held the Highlanders to be God Almighty's princes and nobles; but his eloquence was—like his kaleidoscope—a few bits of glittering glass that, when turned and turned, make new figures. Sir William, as a reader, had a continuous flow of silvery accents; but when talking he stammered at every syllable, and then he could only say, as he wedged in some strong expletives, "The Highlanders! The motto is—rob, rob, and their practice is to do it, to rob, rob, right and left—unmitigated Rob's men, robbers!" I felt that Rob was abroad in Edinburgh, and that on every inch of pavement and of carpeted floor his "foot was upon his native heath, and his name was Macgregor!" Not the "eagle," but the

crowning cock was "lord above," to break my sleep by night, and "Rob was lord below," to keep me from hearing a word of sense by day. I fled from Edinburgh to Ecclefechan. But your city and College must be bitten every now and then by some favourite. After *Rob*, they long had a *Bab* of whom they incessantly babbled—Babington Macaulay. Next they were in frenzy about a Bill, "sweet William"—the immortal Weg ! Ah, me ! Another babbler, truly ! Yet words, issuing merely from the teeth, can bite, and leave—in the bitten—the poison of raging admiration. Oh ! the immensity of the windbag, since after such a prodigious escape of words, he floats about everywhere as swollen as ever, while the *Dizzy* windbag often showed a collapse, and needed time to take in a fresh pumping. How madly Edinburgh raised her hosannahs to the spouting statesman ! He had been the idol of the big cities of the Empire ; and when he stooped to be to Edinburgh its own special god, how intense was Auld Reekie's pride ! Compared with the G.O.M., what was the grand old Castle, the grand old Palace, and the far grander and older Arthur's Seat ? He had also been the idol of Oxford University, and when he stooped to have his shrine in Edinburgh College the joy within all the "faculties" of Professors and students was unbounded. But the crowning proof of Edinburgh infatuation about Weg was furnished by an eminent firm of publishers. They were about to issue new editions of the Waverley Novels in various sizes of sheets, and at different prices, to show that the old Waverley mine was still unexhausted. Some new attraction must be found to enhance the perennial charms of the Scott fictions. It happened that Weg had just given a conversational lecture on Scott at Hawarden to villagers and the Castle visitors. It was a flabby mass of commonplace praise, gathered from what were the highways of criticism in Scott's day. But the Edinburgh publishers hastened to incorporate this trashy lecture with the new editions of the Waverley Novels, so that Gladstone not only rides down to all posterity along with Scott in the Waverley chariot, but is seen there standing over Sir Walter and crowning him with the laurel—and such a laurel as that poor Hawarden lecture ! Thus, your Weg-bitten Edinburgh and its publishers insert a Weg-speech on Waverley pages, and introduce the spouter as the supreme judge, to pronounce the irrevocable "Well done !" I hate coming to

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Edinburgh, for I must hold down my head in passing the Scott monument, lest I should see a figure placing the Hawarden laurel-crown upon the statue that sits under the arch ! Wretched man that I am in Edinburgh ! To be hunted down by this succession of local favourites—*Robs, Babs, Babblers*, and *Rabs* ! The first and the last are bearable in proper time and place ; but the two in the middle are without excuse and beyond endurance.'

I have heard many good talkers in my time. Thomas Aird, although a recluse, had many excellent things to say which came from living observation and quiet study. He was not glib like a hedge-sparrow, but grunted along like a river through rocks and over pot-holes. Still, I think he allowed interruptions—and that, as I gather, great talkers never do ; and therefore I would rather say what I have to say of his 'couthy speech' when I am speaking of conversation. But even here we must distinguish. The talker is not a raconteur who is simply a bubbling tap from a cistern. Nothing is so poor an entertainment as the mere repetition of good stories, however well they are told. But talk, like books, must have the merit of thought in it—and great talk is private oratory.

## CHAPTER IX

### CRITICS

On the whole honest—Easier to be clever than accurate—The vocation a high one—Mere veracity—Men who write for a living—The critics' scales—What convinces—Classes of critics—Biographers—Boswell and his *Johnson*—Lockhart, Macaulay—Literature and journalism—Advertisement—Pope on critics—Matthew Arnold in essay on Criticism—Justness of spirit—A critic and a man—The critic guide we require.

CRITICS are on the whole honest, but slovenly. They, for the most part, look out not for the merits of the author, but for something to hang a smart saying of their own upon. It is much easier to be clever than to be accurate. The former comes to those gentlemen of the agile press by nature, the latter only by the hard work of reading. Of course quotation is a great resource of the critic, and as they are paid by the column, the quotation is like 'found money,' to use a Scotch phrase, to them. And yet, rightly looked at, the vocation of a critic is a high, responsible, and important one. He is a trustee of the books and works he criticises for the public. He owes two or perhaps three important duties—a duty to the author he reads, a duty to the public he writes for, and a duty to himself if he is an honest man.

It is not enough if a critic speaks the truth, for the truth is good or bad according to the light which is brought to bear on it. Mere veracity is the easy prey of a mistake. Seen at a distance it is easy to

mistake a man for a tree-trunk, or a tree-trunk for a man, and to assert the one or the other, misleads, it may be, but may be good faith in criticism after all. But under such circumstances, in such half-lights, it is wiser for a man not to assert at all. Wait till you get nearer and then you may definitely declare that it is the bole of an oak, or a blockhead. But the critic who aspires to say not only what he thinks is true at the instant, but really to guide his fellow-men—and that is the ideal of the critic—must have better eyes than that, and must not pawn off his mistakes as valuable criticisms upon a foolish public, who think that a thing in print is somehow more authentic than the scaffolding manuscript from which, by the building compositor, it was erected.

¶ But perhaps I am ‘taking too much on myself,’ as the huffy people say, when I preach at critics. Men who write for a living cannot afford to be perfect scales to weigh merits and demerits in. And, besides, these scales which we have adopted as a metaphor (as old as the hills) are quite a misleading figure of speech, for all the scales of men’s minds are loaded. We weigh men not in a hair-balance, but in our prejudices; and we pretend that as we are not responsible for our leanings, it does not really matter what we say so long as we take the long ears of an inattentive public. ‘Evidence,’ I somewhere said, but not in print, ‘does not convince. It is self convinces self.’

For an author who has been under the harrow there is the consolation not only of a superior pride, but another, for if he collates the reviews he will find probably there are as many ‘ayes’ as ‘noes’ to ‘have it,’ and he himself can give the casting vote.

But there are various classes of critics. Speakers have been divided into two classes—those that have something to say, and those that have got to say something. Well, with regard to critics, there are some parasitic ones who ride to popularity upon the backbiting and back of some great man. Thus you find your biographers like Boswell, a poor flea on a broad back. It is true that Johnson gave him a bad time for his pains. It is said ‘the worm will turn,’ but Boswell never did. Yet it is odd, we should never have heard of Boswell if it had not been for his *Johnson*, and we should have known very little of Johnson if it had not been for his *Boswell*. But such critics as Boswell and Lockhart are quite in a high category. Then come the critics like Macaulay, who with his glib style and glib mind and liberal bias wanted to make a reputation like David Hume, both as a historian—that is, a critic of the events of time—and as an essayist. He was eminently readable, while Hume was eminently rememberable.

Then come the smaller fry of criticism who are contributing to the run-and-read literature of journalism, and these are for the most part only a part of the paraphernalia of advertisement. They review the books that are advertised in the other columns. But no one would call that bribery in these days of an immaculate press, and it must have been an author that altered the old saying about the way to get ‘wealthy and wise’ into

‘Early to bed and early to rise  
Is no use unless you advertise.’

It is quite true, as was said, that if you give a dog a bad name it is well to hang him; it is also true that if you give a book a good name you sell it.

But it is bad taste to goad at critics and suggest that in the past they have mauled you. Some one (I forget who it was), sneering, said that 'critics are people who dust men's clothes,' but I have often known critics 'dust men's jackets' very properly for them.

Shenstone expressed the common view of critics when he said, 'A poet that fails in writing becomes often a morose critic. The weak and insipid white wine makes at length excellent vinegar'—a view that, we have seen, has been put in words again and again. But the truer view of the critic is that his is a high and responsible calling, and that although many fail to reach the goal, most have aspirations, at any rate, in that direction. 'A perfect judge,' Pope wrote, and Pope's art was neatness :

'A perfect judge will read each work of wit  
With the same spirit that its author writ.'

And that is one of the attitudes of real criticism. Put yourself, if you can, in the writer's shoes, instead of putting him in a punitive corner and only letting him out after a drubbing. Matthew Arnold in his essay on Criticism said wisely, for he was often wise : 'Criticism is disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.' Need a man long for a higher or better vocation ?

But in his essay on Heine he accuses Carlyle of lacking 'the one quality of justness of spirit,' which is in his view the necessary endowment of a critic. Under the unexceptionable phrase, 'justness of spirit,' he really hides the meaning, which is that a critic must be like the pair of scales which weighs pounds of sugar. He wants a critic

without human nature, for further on he says of Carlyle that, 'man of genius as he is, and no one recognises his genius more admirably than I do, he has for the functions of a critic a little too much of the self-will and eccentricity of a genuine son of Great Britain.' What does he want in a critic? I want a 'man'! Yet in the same essay he points to Goethe's remark that 'through me the German poets have become aware that a man must live from within outwards. So the artist must work from within outwards, seeing that, make what contortions he will, he can only bring to light his own individuality.' If so, how can you have a man like a mathematical instrument? If this is what 'justness of spirit' means, I will have none of it—and I prefer the individuality of a genius like Carlyle to all your weights and balances. What you want is as 'just a personality and individuality' as you can get, but a man without a bias is not a man. The bias we want is one which will make the bowl run heavenward and not hellward. That is the critical guide we require.

## CHAPTER X

### NOVELS COMFORTABLE AND UNCOMFORTABLE

The novel in the nineteenth century—Wholesome literature—Fielding and Smollett—Galt's *Annals of the Parish*—Miss Ferrier and Jane Austen—Scott's novels—Mrs. Oliphant and Mrs. Gaskell—Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*—Hugo's novels—Anatole France's *Crime of Sylvester Bonnard*—Daudet's *Sapho* and *Taratarin*—Flaubert's *Salammbo* and *Madame Bovary*—Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*—Dr. Cranstoun's *Catullus*—Tolstoi's *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*—Turgeniev—Dostoevski's *Injury and Insult* and *Crime and Punishment*—Gogol's *Dead Souls*—Tchekoff's *The Darling*, *The Duel*, and *Russian Silhouettes*—Maxim Gorki—Michael Artzebashev's *Sanine*—Feodor Sologub's *Little Demon*—Compton Mackenzie's *The Carnival and Sinister Street*—Gilbert Cannan's *Round the Corner* and *Young Ernest*—Conrad—Walpole.

JUST as the play was the leading feature in literature in the great times of Elizabeth, so the novel has been the leading literary feature of the nineteenth century, and the twentieth so far as it has gone. My own impression is, that there are too many novels written, and that, I suppose, is because too many are read. It is a case of demand and supply, and the journeyman writer would cease to write if the idle reader ceased to read. Not that a good novel is not a good thing, and that a man or woman is well employed in reading it, but that a bad or an empty novel is not a good thing and much time is wasted in the vapid perusal of them.

But one thing may be said of the novels of the nineteenth century, and that is that they were, on the whole, wholesome literature; indeed, the novels

of that time were exceedingly comfortable novels. Not 'stings that bid nor stand, nor sit, but go,' but really cushions provided for the sofa of the dilettante. Fielding and Smollett may have been at times very coarse, but the times were rough. When we come to Galt in the *Annals of the Parish*, and Miss Ferrier and Jane Austen, those books which were still full of interest were certainly less open even to that objection. Scott's novels were as companionable books as one could desire: you could be friends with all of them. They very seldom rose to the level of high drama—perhaps the *Bride of Lammermoor* did—but never sunk to the slums for their inspiration. He was faithfully followed in this moral walk by Dickens and Thackeray, by Trollope and Mrs. Oliphant and Mrs. Gaskell, and a host of other writers whose wagons may not have been hitched to a star, but who certainly did not sail upon the sewers. It was a literature not of the cothurnus, but of the slipper sometimes down at the heel. But whether there is a change in the public taste, or whether the writers of light literature aim higher by going lower, the books of to-day are certainly not those we like to have lying about, or would willingly put in the hands of the young who are supposed to be innocent.

Of course there were bad books long before our days. Some of Defoe's are not good reading. Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* (1733), while it is great, is not edifying. Of course there is nothing that even squeamishness could take exception to in Hugo's great novels. They lend themselves to no such criticism and are above praise. Anatole France too, so far as I know his works, is 'on the heights.' The *Crime of Sylvester Bonnard* is not only good but beautiful. But it is a little curious that three of the

great French writers of the last century, while they have written much besides, have only been really great, have really produced masterpieces when they put sensualism into print. Thus perhaps Daudet's best book is his *Sapho*, but it is all about an infatuated liaison. Of course I am not forgetting his inimitable *Tartarin*, which, however, is after all a farce and not a drama. Flaubert's *Salammbo* wearied me. His *Madame Bovary*, which appeared in the *Revue de Paris*, is a work of genius, but for it he was indicted for an offence against morals. Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, again, is perhaps his best book, but it scandalised even Paris for a time. All these are works of genius, but it is genius making mud-pies.

I once knew a Dr. Cranstoun who was really a ripe scholar, but he chose to be known as the translator of *Catullus*, *Tibullus*, and *Propertius*. I have his *Propertius* and, so far as I can judge, the doing into English is well done. But it was an odd taste to have his claim to fame founded upon that particular tripod of Latin poets. And to me it seems a little sad that in the case of such men as Daudet, Flaubert, and Gautier, their best books should be their worst. But these bawdy masters have been followed by the ruck of Russian novelists.

Tolstoi wrote some European fictions: *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* are immortal. Even his later work, when he had embraced the creed of 'Resist not evil,' *Resurrection*, was a work of great power. Turgeniev was a prose poet. Dostoievski wrote great books. I have only read his *Injury and Insult* and *Crime and Punishment*, but I read them with more admiration than with pleasure. It is quite true that in relation to such high

endeavours, it would be wrong to look merely for amusement. Nothing great is to be attained without some penance. I read Gogol's *Dead Souls* with respect and some disappointment. And quite recently I read Tchekoff's *The Darling*, *The Duel*, *Three Years*, and *Russian Silhouettes* with eager assent and admiration. These are not the ruck of Russian novelists.

Of course it is wrong to criticise the tendency of a national literature if one is only acquainted with a few of its authors. But recently a good many Russian books of fiction have been such popular items that they have overflowed in translations into other countries, and many of these have been received by the critics here with welcoming praise. I have only become acquainted with some of them. Maxim Gorki's short tales caught on like barbed wire. His *Three of Them* is great, but not good, using good in the old sense. Michael Artzebashev's *Sanine* was unquestionably a book of power, and perhaps of good purpose, but it was also a book which in some of its aspects disgusted some readers who still had what used to be called a moral sense. Feodor Sologub's *Little Demon*, again, was full of cleverness, but it reeked of vodka. If the Russians in reality drank as they did in that book, it was high time for the Czar's 'abolition order.' But it was not only 'wine,' but women that were offensive in his book. I have not read Kuprin's *A Slav Soul* or Korolenko's *In Bad Company*, but after reading *Sanine* and *The Little Demon* I certainly felt I had been in bad company for too many pages.

Now literature is no longer, if it is at all good, that of a country; it belongs to a continent, and all these books that I have been speaking of circulate in

England either in the original or in translation ; and they do more than circulate, they influence our own writers of fiction. Some of these, of to-day, have perhaps as great ability as these Russians, but some of them have, in imitation of these, presented very dirty cups to their readers to drink their genius out of. ' Make your book dirty and you may be censured, but you will be read,' seems to be the motto of some of them, and the lubricity which they affect makes their works of art quite uncomfortable reading. Mr. Compton Mackenzie's *The Carnival* had great merits and defects which were on the verge of the disgusting.<sup>1</sup> His *Sinister Street*, too, in its length a long lane with many turnings, was a work of some genius, but it revels in the slums and leaves a bad taste in one's mouth. Mr. Gilbert Cannan's *Round the Corner* was a somewhat squalid story, but with touches of vice which remind us of his Russian masters. A good deal of the love in the novels of to-day is nothing but naked passion. It used to be said that ' Love laughs at locksmiths ' ; in these times in our fiction ' Love laughs at marriage.' Thus we read in *Young Ernest*, by Mr. Gilbert Cannan, these words as coming out of the mouth of a respectable woman who is described by the lovers as ' splendid ' : ' Marriage ? Neither of you have a scrap of conventional religion, you can't personally be worried by scruples. Really, the marriage laws of this country are in such a mess that it has become almost a duty for decent people to transgress them. They must be altered in our time, so there is nothing for it but to disregard them,' and so on. This is excellent advice to two young people, one of whom, the man, has

<sup>1</sup> The squalid story of Hagworth Street, Islington, is well told, but the incident of Jenny in the ' flat ' is quite superfluous filth.

deserted his wife and is now contemplating the desertion of his mistress. That pious opinion is quotable, but there is much in these uncomfortable books that I would hesitate to write down again here. Of course among the younger school there are men who are far above such censure. Mr. Conrad is too original to imitate the Russian unashamedness, and Mr. Hugh Walpole has written novels without the help of those naked arts which seem to secure a prickly popularity.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PULPIT

Incongruity an element of humour—Humour in Court—Mr. Hope—Humour in the pulpit—‘Coughers and scoffers’ in church—Humorists and the priesthood—Rabelais and Scarron—Swift and Sterne—Sydney Smith and ‘Thomas Ingoldsby’—The Rev. Dr. Lees on clerical humour—Keeping awake in church—‘Christians, awake’—The flavour of peppermint—Dr. Lees’s own humour—Walter Dunlop and the devil’s bairns—A view of oaths and ‘compromise’ swearing—Prayer for fine weather—Also a prayer for rain—Prayer at the launch of H.M.S. *Mars*—Short sermons—Coleridge hissed—Paley’s sermon—Lord Halsbury’s stories—The Dean of St. Paul’s—What the boys said of him at Eton—The gloomy Dean, and cheerful Deans—Sterne’s sermon—How he made his sermons—Sydney Smith’s joke as to fasts and feasts.

WE are all more or less persuaded that incongruity is one of the elements of humour. A round man in a square hole is a sight for the gods to laugh at, and many jokes that find a ‘ready chorus’ in our Courts of law are thought more of because of the general dulness, not to say solemnity, of the proceedings in these haunts of justice, and would scarcely deserve a smile in less sober surroundings. I must not illustrate that proposition by any recent instances of humour on the Bench or at the Bar, lest I should be thought to derogate from the merits of the humorists; but take a quite long-ago joke as an instance. In a case in which Mr. Hope (afterwards Mr. Hope Scott), Mr. Joy, Q.C., and Mr. Hill were the counsel, Joy was called away to some other Court, and Mr. Hope

explained that his learned friend would return immediately. There was some delay and his learned friend did not return, and Hill got up and explained to the Court that

‘Hope told a flattering tale  
That Joy would soon return,’

which shows that the lawyers sometimes make jokes quite worthy of being reported in these coffers of learning, the Law Reports, but which, as I have said, are not particularly funny when transplanted into less austere surroundings.

But it is the same with humour in the pulpit. When a congregation is in the spiritual doldrums, even an occasional sneeze will relieve the monotony to cheerfulness. And a laugh is sometimes to be got out of the ‘coughs which drown the parson’s saw,’ for some wit said there were two classes of people who went to church, ‘coughers and scoffers.’ So too, perhaps, our pulpit humorists have had more credit for their wit than they deserved, or would have got had the background of their illuminations been less sombre than they were.

Some, however, claim that most of our wits have been churchmen, and amongst them France has given us some notable examples in Rabelais and Scarron. We ourselves have had Swift and Sterne, and later still Sydney Smith and ‘Thomas Ingoldsby,’ who showed heels under their ‘frocks.’ Indeed, the use of humour as a pulpit instrument has been defended by some of our own ecclesiastics. Thus the Rev. Dr. Lees, in a lecture on ‘Church Humour, where he rightly claims that ministers must be *men* and that men are not complete without a sense of humour, said: ‘In some places in the old days it was the custom to pay a man to go round the church

at intervals and waken the sleepers by poking them with a long pole. In some towns even in this Christian age a brisk trade was carried on upon Sunday in lozenges, which were largely purchased by church-goers perhaps to counteract the possible soporific effect of the divines they were going to hear. He hoped he would not be thought extravagant when he said that perhaps a little humour flashing out occasionally might answer as well as the long pole or the clandestine confection.' This statement certainly seems to show that the report as to a certain clergyman of the Church of England may have been founded on fact. It is said that he announced that the hymn after the sermon would be 'Christians, awake.'

Still we would be sorry to lose the flavour of peppermint from the Scotch kirk, which is the incense of these places of worship, even for the intellectual delight of hearing Harry Lauder beating the drum ecclesiastic.

But Dr. Lees was himself a humorist, and in his lecture spoke of the sham man who, 'having a faculty of seeing the bright side of things and a genial disposition, yet pulled a long face and went about like an ascetic, as if he had swallowed a poker and as sour as if he daily washed in vinegar.' He rightly deprecated the presence of 'old women in the pulpit,' for 'old women,' as some one defined it, is a term of opprobrium applied to stupid men. But there have been no lack of humorists in the Church of the country, and the country to which Dr. Lees belonged has had its fair share of them. There were stories in my young days of a Mr. Walter Dunlop—who had been a minister of some denominational church in the Dumfries district—which were told and had their humorous side perhaps :

Once two children making a butt of the reverend gentleman—for all children think the eccentric fair quarry—stopped him in the street and said :

‘ Mr Dunlop, your work is done. The deil’s (devil) dead.’

‘ Well,’ said the wit, ‘ I ’ll still hae twa faitherless bairns to look after.’

He did not make it an opportunity, as another minister did, of combating the modern notion that there is no devil at all by saying, as he did, vigorously :

‘ A religion without a devil is not worth a damn.’<sup>1</sup>

Once, too, on his rounds Mr. Dunlop stopped at the door of a ‘ guidwife ’ who offered him a glass of ale, and when it was poured out apologised for its want of sparkle and froth by saying :

‘ I fear, Mr. Dunlop, it ’s dead.’

‘ I wouldna wonder,’ he answered from a poignant memory ; ‘ it was unco weak when last I passed this way.’

There were many other such reminiscences of this ‘ spiritual pastor and master ’ which had a vogue in my youth, but which have now probably shared the fate of the weak beer and died a natural death and been buried in oblivion. There was another minister in the same district who deprecated swearing, in the pulpit. He said he found the use of expletives was growing among his flock, and that not in the candid form which he mentioned in his prayer to the Almighty, ‘ like damn and devil,’ but in what he called ‘ mid swearing,’ and here again he illustrated

<sup>1</sup> In the 39th Psalm I find these words of David : ‘ I kept silent even from good words.’ So! he says nothing of the other kind of words! But that reminds me of a minister who was asked by one of his flock what was the meaning of the words of Scripture, ‘ He clothed himself with curses as with a garment,’ and replied that it just meant ‘ he had a habit of swearing.’

his prayer by giving instances and mentioned such mid-oaths as 'Losh, Gosh, and Govenante.' His prayer may have been answered with regard to the last neutral tinted oath, or possibly obsolescence has overtaken that mouthful, but with regard to the other compromises with devil, 'Losh and Gosh,' I fear they are still rampant.

There is a story of a Scotch minister—it may be in Dean Ramsay's book, but I have not gone into research for the roots of these trivial recollections—who was praying at harvest time for fair weather, in days of deluge. Perhaps he was a little impatient, or expected too rapid an answer to his supplications. The rain continued and the wind threw handfuls of drops blattering against the kirk windows, and the minister continued :

'Weel, weel, bicker away, good Lord, and spoil a' the puir bodies' crops, as ye did last year. Ye hae muckle credit o' your wark.'

But speaking of the answer to prayer, some naughty boys, knowing that the minister in a long, painful drought was going to pray for quiet, fruitful showers, got a bucket of water and threw the whole plashing contents against the window at the opportune moment of the prayer for rain. It took the minister a little aback. He paused in his request and said, 'But, O Lord, that 's ridiculous!'

There is quite a recent instance of what Dr. Lees calls the substitute for 'clandestine confections.' On the occasion of the launch of H.M.S. *Mars*, on a very wet day at Dundee, it was expected that the Bishop of Brechin would be present, but he was unable to be there. The authorities had recourse to an old gentleman, a minister, who offered up a prayer in which the following passage was perhaps the most

remarkable: 'O Lord, in the unavoidable absence of the Lord Bishop of Brechin, and in the deplorable state of the weather, we do not propose to address Thee at any very great length.'

A very judicious remark, like that of the clergyman who told his hearers that 'Speech is silvern, Silence is golden, and as I haven't any small change about me to-night, I will let you off with the gold.'

Not perhaps so much to the point as the charity sermon on the text, 'Who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord': 'If you like the security, down with the dust.'

A Scotch minister, being perhaps out of the 'small change' referred to, said to his 'man' in the vestry:

'Man, Robert, I wish you could preach for me the day.'

'I canna do that,' he answered, 'but I often pray for you.'

This also comes, if not directly, indirectly from the pulpit. A minister was presented by his congregation on some particular occasion with a purse containing £50, a clock, and a Bible. When the good man died he had written his 'will' on the fly-leaf of the Bible. He said: 'The money is gone, the clock is going yet, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.'

Coleridge (Samuel Taylor), as a young man, was preaching—he did little else—when he was hissed by the audience. Whereupon he said, 'When a cold stream of truth is poured on red-hot prejudices, no wonder that they hiss.'

But going back to old-time pulpit wit. When Pitt was made Prime Minister as a lad, Paley preached a sermon when the new-made First Lord was in church. The place was crowded with toadies and place-

hunters. He said, 'There is a lad here who hath three barley loaves and two small fishes, but what is that among so many ?'

Lord Halsbury, in speaking on the 11th December 1891, is reported by the *Times* to have said, 'he remembered when the head of his own college was asked by a distinguished preacher at St. Mary's what he thought of his sermon, the former replied, "I heard what I hope never to hear again: I heard the clock strike twice." ' He also told how a Sheriff's chaplain asked a judge what was the proper length for a sermon. 'Well,' was the answer, 'twenty minutes, with a leaning to the side of mercy.'

There was no joke in the saying (which I have no doubt was a quotation, but I do not know where it came from) of the Bishop of Dover (I think Bishop Eden), which I heard in the Temple Church on the 4th April 1895, and which I have remembered. He said :

'Plant a deed and you will reap a habit,  
Plant a habit and you will reap a character,  
Plant a character and you will reap a destiny.'

The present Dean of St. Paul's, although, as he knows, he is called 'the gloomy Dean,' is rich in humour. In *The Church and the Age* he wittily and wisely says: 'Put shortly, Socialism always assumes that the sty makes the pig, while Christianity declares that the pig makes the sty.' But he was, while a master at Eton, himself the pivot of a boys' joke. The youngsters used to quote the title of the famous Cromwellian pamphlet, 'Killing no Murder' (Kill Inge no"murder), and used to think that he was gloomy enough to attend his own funeral. But he says, in the same delightful little book I have quoted from, 'I have found myself dubbed "the

gloomy Dean" in contrast with certain more popular ecclesiastics who, because they can always conscientiously shout with the largest crowd, are naturally cheerful deans.' It was of one of these, I suppose, the story is told that, having been offered a deanery, one of his children assured a visitor, when asked if he had accepted it, 'Father is still praying for light, but mother has begun to pack up.'

But to return to the long pole to waken sleepers. Sterne's sermon, in which he chose for his text, 'It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting,' which began 'That I deny,' was certainly a 'poke' that would make the congregation sit up, but for the most part his sermons were so dull as to make ditchwater sparkling in comparison. But it is not altogether to be wondered at, for the Rev. Lawrence Sterne, in *Tristram Shandy*, which is better than his sermons, says that 'Of all the several ways of beginning a book which are now in practice throughout the known world, I am confident my own way of doing it is best. I am sure it is the most religious, for I begin with writing the first sentence and trusting to Almighty God for the second'—a method of collaboration which has its obvious convenience.

I only remember one piece of Sydney Smith's pulpit humour, and it was a little bitter. He remarked that 'the poor kept all the fasts, and the rich all the feasts.'

## CHAPTER XII

### ‘THE PLAY’S THE THING’

A reader of plays—*The Corsican Brothers* and *Duchess of Malfi*—*The London Stage*—*Pizarro*—*Gay’s Beggar’s Opera*—Burns’s *Jolly Beggars*—Mrs. Hannah More’s *Percy*, some quotations from—The Rev. John Home’s *Douglas*—*The German Theatre*—Schiller’s *Robbers* and *Don Carlos*—Kotzebue—Lacy’s plays—Burlesques—Goldsmith and Sheridan—Restoration playwrights—Elizabethan dramatists—Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Ford, Tourneur, Middleton, Shirley, Heywood—Marlowe—Modern plays—Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, Granville Barker, etc.—Picture palaces—Wrote a tragedy, *Bianco*—A comedy, *One in a Thousand*—The view of a London manager—Mrs. Scott Siddons—Wanted *L’Homme qui Rit* dramatised—Letter from—Wrote to Victor Hugo—Miss Glyn—Some letters from.

I ADMIT I have been a reader of plays. In my youth I was a playgoer, and have sometimes walked home trembling on a night, below clouds or stars, after a performance of *The Corsican Brothers*, or after seeing an actress, a Miss Goddard who also played the part of Hamlet on occasion, in a courage-staggering rendering of the *Duchess of Malfi*. I had in these early days access to two books ; one was *The London Stage*, or a collection in three volumes of various dramas, tragedies, comedies, and farces which had been performed at London theatres. Volume i. began with *Pizarro*, altered from the German of Kotzebue by R. B. Sheridan, and there were hundreds of other plays in these volumes, many of which I read.

It was there I came across *Gay’s Beggar’s Opera*,

which was produced and ran for a long time when Rich was lessee of Drury Lane, and it was in connection with that fact that the obvious joke was made that the play was 'making Gay rich and Rich gay.' I confess how such a play 'took the time' puzzles me. But it is as difficult to tell what will be popular as to make up your mind why certain works were popular in the past. If you want to have a real beggar's opera, read Burns's *Jolly Beggars*.

But as to the observation that it is hard to tell what will take the taste of to-morrow, and also to understand the taste of yesterday, let me give an illustration. It is really interesting to look at the neglected and forgotten literature of the past, not perhaps so much for its own sake as to see what our ancestors accepted, nay, applauded. It is difficult to account for the popularity of some of the works that had a vogue when we compare them with the great works of the older past which were then neglected. I had once the curiosity to read Mrs. Hannah More's *Percy*, a play saturated with blood for which David Garrick wrote both a prologue and an epilogue, and which had considerable success and a considerable run on the London stage. How it came by any popularity it is now a little difficult to determine. The plot is the common one of a maid who loves one man and is forced to marry another. The latter is jealous of the old love, and hence duels and poison and deaths—some lingering—are all there. But it was to see what literature delighted the people, that I read it. Elwina, speaking of how she was forced to marry Douglas, speaks compendiously :

‘ I sigh’d, I struggled, fainted and complied.’

No redundancy there.

Again she says :

' And virtue's safest station is retreat.'

Douglas, with an appreciation of her beauty, speaks of the world

' Where far inferior charms  
Only presume to shine when you are absent.'

The father, Raby, says :

' Your labouring soul turns inward on itself';

which is something like fliping the ugly bride who was pronounced by her husband to be like the king's daughter, ' all glorious within.'

Elwina after that embraces

' his venerable knees.'

And Percy speaks of

' The banquet of a tear,'

and also says :

' Kind as consenting peace.'

And, according to the play, Percy's

' last convulsive groan of death  
Dislodges the sad spirit,'

but before that something, I forgot what,

' Inflames me to superior madness.'

There are a hundred such phrases which miss the mark and tickle to laughter. Instead of being, as they were in the real poets, additions to our knowledge, discoveries of likenesses or appropriatenesses which we had failed to recognise, but are now felt—the conviction is so strong from the inevitable word—here the words, which seem to have run into their places and lost their way, only darken counsel. The words are round words in square holes, and are there for the purpose of tears but only produce indomitable laughter. And yet Mrs. Hannah More

was an excellent woman and had in her day an astounding reputation, and *Percy* had a run.

It was in these volumes of plays, too, that I learned 'by heart' from a Scotch minister, the Rev. John Home of Athelstaneford, the speech 'My name is Norval.' This work *Douglas*, too, had a short vogue when it was produced at Covent Garden in 1757, with Peg Woffington in the cast. It is of that first night that the story is told that when the last words were uttered :

'Let every rite  
With cost and pomp upon their funeral wait,  
For Randolph hopes he never will return,'

and the curtain fell amid plaudits, a little boy in the gallery, with more patriotism than taste, and in a small shrill voice which could not but be heard everywhere in the now hushed house, cried: 'Whaur's your Willie Shakespeare noo ?'

But, on the whole, there was much pleasure to be got and a great deal to be learned from these three volumes. Then, again, there were four volumes which were called *The German Theatre*, containing, of course, *The Robbers* and *Don Carlos* by Schiller; half a dozen plays by Kotzebue, including *Deaf and Dumb* and *Lovers' Vows*; and two by James Marius Babo. But on the whole I found the German theatre a dull place, and I confess I read *Dagobert*, by Babo, with little interest. But from these library books I went to Lacy in the Strand and had such modern works as the burlesques which were in vogue in my youth—*Endymion*, *The Maid and the Magpie*, and, better than these, Robertson's plays, especially *Society*, from which the 'Lend me five shillings' scene has lived in my memory for fifty years. But after that I learned that in plays, even although I had revelled in Goldsmith and Sheridan and had become well

acquainted with the 'Restoration' playwrights, the moderns were poor things in comparison with the men who wrote for the stage in the time of Elizabeth, and I took to reading the more profitable drama of 'rare' Ben Jonson, of Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster and Ford, Tourneur and Middleton, and Shirley and Heywood, and I think it was even after I had discovered these gold-mines that I came to know Marlowe's 'mighty lines.'

In more recent times I have read, I think, all Mr. Bernard Shaw's plays; John Galsworthy's *Silver Box*, *Joy*, and *Strife*; Granville Barker's *Three Plays* and *Madras House*; Macdonald Hastings' *The New Sin*; Hausmann and Barker's *Prunella*, Githa Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son*, Pinero's *His House in Order*, Stephen Phillips' *Sin of David*, most of Maeterlinck, and Hauptmann's *Sunken Bell*. Of my 'seeings' I say nothing, for now that my ears are not such open doors as they were I lose much of a play in the theatre, and am looking forward to a time when I may be driven to a 'picture palace,' where one can still understand and see *Still Waters Run Deep* and *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and follow them with one's eyes.

A mere enumeration of the works that have left their impress upon memory is dull work to listen to. Indeed I quite early found it dull work to read some of these, and I aspired to produce stage plays myself. I wrote, when I was still young, and before I had been called to the dusty duties of the Bar, a long and laborious play in blank verse called *Bianca*; but it has never seen the light, and I honestly believe it deserves the obscurity in which it has been hidden all these years.

I afterwards wrote a comedy called *One in a*

*Thousand*, and I had the temerity to ask a London manager—at the time at the top of the tree of popularity—which has, by the way, very thin twigs from which a man is apt to fall—to look at it. The ‘great man’ wrote back and said he could not read plays in manuscript, but that if I could have it printed he would consider it. I had not sufficient confidence in its merits to speculate in the way he proposed, so it has not been acted, and has only been read to my children when they were quite little and uncritical, and who admired it much. I have not ventured to read it to them since they have come to the years of more discretion.

In the early ‘seventies, at the house of Sheriff Hector in Edinburgh, and again at my brother’s house at Wakefield, I made the acquaintance of Mrs. Scott Siddons, the granddaughter of ‘the’ Mrs. Siddons. I had heard her read and seen her act, and she did both well in those her young days; and although she was a little woman she had a look of her grandmother, ‘the Siddons,’ although not so much of a tragedy queen as to ‘stab the potatoes,’ or address a call-boy in blank verse: ‘I asked for water, boy, you’ve brought me beer.’

But Mrs. Scott Siddons had an idea that she would like to play ‘Dea’ in a drama founded upon Victor Hugo’s *L’Homme qui Rit*. My own view was that it would be impossible to reproduce from the novel, on the stage, the scene in the House of Lords. But at her suggestion I made a play out of the novel. I find her writing to me as follows:

‘JAVA,’ 21 August ‘70.

MY DEAR SIR,—In haste. There are various ways of paying the author. Mr. D—, who has let me have a play, I gave either £100 down or £3 per night. My idea is now to arrange

for bringing out yours carefully and well in London at Xmas. If by fair means we could get Victor Hugo's co-operation, it may be possible to prevent any one else pirating it.

This you must at once look to. I am on the track to get Lord Dudley to let me have Her Majesty's Theatre, Hay-market.—Yours faithfully,

I. SCOTT SIDDONS.

Well, I did what she asked me and wrote to Victor Hugo, and had a nice consenting letter in return, written for him by some one, for he explained that he did not write English. I meant to treasure his letter, but it, like many other treasures, has slipped through my fingers. But although we secured his co-operation, Mrs. Scott Siddons never succeeded in getting a theatre where the play could be produced, and perhaps that was lucky for my reputation. The manuscript was, when last I saw it twenty years ago, in a black leather trunk, the coffin of a great many still-born children of the imagination. It is not, therefore, with reference to that buried play that I keep my faith that 'the play's the thing.'

Miss Glyn—I think her real name was Cairns—was, I believe, in her day an actress of power and purpose. I knew her long after 'her day'—indeed when she had physical proportions which unfitted her for the stage, but she still gave 'Readings,' and had eyes which, in Heine's phrase, could 'speak catapults.' I heard her read and could understand that when she was younger—for I only knew her when she was getting old—she might have been a great actress. I only knew her as an intelligent and kind lady. I remember only one thing she said, and that was by way of gentle rebuke. I was, quite improperly I admit, wearing a very good imitation of a white moss-rose in my dandy button-hole. She

mistook it for a real flower and I had to undeceive her, and she properly disapproved of the 'sham' decoration. I think I ventured to argue the matter with her, saying that it would be a pain to me to be without the little bit of ornament, and she said quite wisely, 'Then wear the pain.'

She had married a Mr. Dallas, and their union was not fortunate as the following letter shows. Poor woman! she had to 'wear her pain.' I find I have two of her notes, written in a loud sprawling hand, and only one of them has an exact date. The first is:

24 HYDE PARK PLACE,  
LONDON, W., Feby. '12.

DEAR MR. BROWNE,—I write from Southampton, where I read to-night and return to —— to-morrow. I cannot find your letter, so send this to the *Morning Post*.

You certainly have not failed to *show the scorn of your heart* at Modernism. I should be sorry to believe you scorn as you seem in that vigorous scold of a Lecture. When I see you I will say more. I have much correspondence, some 23 letters to answer, all coming out of that ugly report in the *Athenæum*. The next thing that will appear in proof will be what took Miss Glyn to the West Riding Asylum and we hear she wants to visit that place again.—Yours in haste, and sincerely of pleasant memories,

ISABELLA DALLAS.

The other is :

13 MOUNT STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE.  
HOLLOWAY PRISON, June 27, 1876.

Don't be alarmed, dear Mr. Browne, because I am here. It is for no fault of mine. Just as I had nearly completed another house at the above address, Mr. D—— caused me to be arrested for refusing to give up the dread letters of the ladies for whom I went into the Divorce Court—Lady W—— and her two daughters, Lady B. L. and Mrs. S.

Will you come and see me?—Yours sincerely,

ISOBEL GLYN.

Alas! alas!

## CHAPTER XIII

### A CHAPTER IN HISTORY

Love your enemies, and hymns of hate—Old-time hatred of a countryman who fought for America against England—Commodore John Paul Jones—Born in Kirkcudbrightshire—A neighbour of mine in space and time—How he has been abused—Did notable things—Carlyle's reference to him in his *French Revolution*—Packed history—Carlyle's own look-out and 'tasting' of the world—'Six feet of Scottish earth'—Paul Jones's doings on the *Ariel*—On the rocks, and with men and courts—Adopted America as his country—Disloyalty of subordinates—The *Ranger*—The *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis*—Threatened Leith and Hull—Landed at Whitehaven—Served Russia—Again men were the difficulties—At the court of Catherine—Black Sea command—Prince of Nassau and Alexiano—Potemkine—Document found amongst his papers—His education—His first voyage—His letters—Retirement in Paris—Anniversary of taking of the Bastille—His death and burial—The United States sends a fleet for his mortal remains.

THERE can be no doubt that the advice to love our enemies is an excellent one, and none the less excellent because it is very difficult to carry into practice. Indeed the tendency of the human heart is not only to hate one's enemy but to think and speak all the ill of him it can, and some people think that the good opinion we have and the affection we bear to our friends is really enhanced in its illumination by this dark shadow of hate which is reserved for our enemies. We know that the Germans, a musical people, have their 'Hymn of Hate,' and their pious prayer—they are a religious people—that God will punish England.

But although our feelings may not have become so explicitly articulate, there is, I am certain, 'no love lost' between us and our German adversaries.

But it was not of current animosities that I proposed to speak in this place, but rather to refer to an old-time hatred which has unduly blackened the reputation of a countryman of our own of no inconsiderable merit—a hatred which has survived to detract from his fame over a hundred years. This is a long-winded hate, and it is curious that it should still exist—for even if we cannot always love our enemies, we can generally forgive them much when the grave has closed its ugly edges over them. It is not easy, then, to account for the long-continued enmity which was shown to his fame during his life, and has tried to smudge the memory of John Paul Jones since his death.

That the son of the gardener at Arbigland—a place which is on the toe of round-shouldered Criffel hill, which stands in a corner of the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, in the parish of Kirkbean, and paddles in the Solway tide—should have made such a mark in history is itself very remarkable; but that his own countrymen should grudge him his fame, should call him 'names' while he was living, and even backbite him almost a hundred years after his death, is equally curious. But there it is. I count myself a kind of neighbour, both in space and time, of the great sailor, for the gardener's cottage at Arbigland is only some twelve miles from the place where I was born, and only about ten miles from the house where I usually spend my summers, and from which the great bulk of Criffel, the glitter of the Solway, and the blue beauties of the Cumberland hills of England can all be seen, and are fine samples of a beautiful world.

But Paul Jones has, as we know, been indicted as a renegade, a pirate, and the Grand Jury of England seem to have brought in a True Bill on these counts. It is late in the day to say that a serious injustice has been done to his memory ; and to point out that we should have classed him with our great admirals and sea captains, if he had only fought for us instead of against us. It is, we think, a matter for regret that the name of John Paul Jones should be a name to conjure with in the United States, and that it is a name on the 'black list' of contempt and neglect with us.

He did some quite notable things, but as some of these achievements were slaps in the face of Britain, as some were serious blows to her sea-power reputation, he has no honour here, and has been rewarded with perhaps an overdose of laudation by his adopted country. The scales have not been held true, and one of them has been loaded with a hatred which, if it were deserved at all, should have been given to the country he served, and not to the instrument which served the United States so well in their struggle for independence. John Paul is entitled to justice at our hands.

Even Carlyle has his picturesque sneer at John Paul in his *French Revolution*, where, by the way, he gives a pleasant enough description of the scenes which surrounded the youth of the great sailor :

'On thee too, for country's sake, O Chevalier John Paul, be a word spent, or misspent ! In faded naval uniform, Paul Jones lingers visible here (Paris) ; like a wineskin from which the wine is all drawn. Like the ghost of himself ! Low is his once loud bruit ; scarcely audible, save, with extreme tedium, in ministerial ante-chambers, in this or the other charitable dining-room, mindful of the past. What changes ; culminatings and declinings ! Not now, poor

Paul, thou lookest wistful over the Solway brine, by the foot of native Criffel, into blue mountainous Cumberland, into blue Infinitude ; environed with thrift, with humble friendliness ; thyself, young fool, longing to be aloft from it, or even to be away from it. Yes, beyond that sapphire Promontory, which men name St. Bees, which is not sapphire either, but dull sandstone, when one gets *close* to it, there is a world. Which world thou too shalt taste of !—From yonder White Haven rise his smoke-clouds ; ominous though ineffectual. Proud Forth quakes at his bellying sails ; had not the wind suddenly shifted. Flamborough reapers, home-going, pause on the hillside ; for what sulphur-cloud is that that defaces the sleek sea ; sulphur-cloud spitting streaks of fire ? A sea cock-fight it is, and of the hottest ; where British *Serapis* and French-American *Bon Homme Richard* do lash and throttle each other, in their fashion ; and lo the desperate valour has suffocated the deliberate, and Paul Jones too is of the Kings of the Sea !'

And he continues this eventful history in a nutshell with :

‘The Euxine, the Meotian waters felt thee next, and long-skirted Turks, O Paul ; and thy fiery soul has wasted itself in thousand contradictions ;—to no purpose. For, in far lands, with scarlet Nassau-Siegens, with sinful Imperial Catherines, is not the heart broken, even as at home with the mean ? Poor Paul ! hunger and dispiritment track thy sinking footsteps ; once, or at most twice, in this Revolution-tumult the figure of thee emerges ; mute, ghostlike, as “with stars dim-twinkling through.” And then, when the light is gone quite out, a National Legislature grants “ceremonial funeral” ! As good had been the natural Presbyterian Kirk-Bell, and six feet of Scottish earth, among the dust of thy loved ones.—*Such* world lay beyond the Promontory of St. Bees. Such is the life of sinful mankind here below.’

All this packed history of John Paul’s doings at Whitehaven, at Leith, off Flamborough Head, and at Otchakoff on the Black Sea, was worth quoting for its graphic succinctness. But it is difficult to gather anything from Carlyle of the man he calls one of the Kings of the Sea. I think for the sake of his picture

he makes the naval uniform 'faded'; again for this reason he speaks of 'charitable dining-rooms,' mindful of the past; and further down refers to hunger tracking his steps—of which, so far as I can ascertain, there is no evidence. But Carlyle ought to have known not to look 'gift-horses' in the mouth, and if you analyse hospitalities, how many of the dinners we are asked to may not be 'mindful of the past,' and charitable too, if we are great talkers as Carlyle was? But, again, why apostrophise the boy who wants to get away and 'taste the world'? What about the son of a mason of Ecclefechan? Although from the houses in the street down which a stream gutter ran there was no sapphire promontory of St. Bees to be seen over the glossy Solway, was there not plainly visible the hill of Repentance on the Hoddam estate, and beyond it and Annan water on its way to the sea was there not the 'blue Infinitude,' and was there not the boy Tom to look wistful into the heaven over all? Was he not tempted away from Annandale out into the world just like 'poor Paul,' to 'taste the world' at Juniper Green, at Chelsea, and elsewhere? Why too sneer at the sailor because—at the time he was writing of, the Revolution-tumult—he was 'mute, ghostlike.' The man was ill, dying, and even Carlyle when he was quite old was like a ghost of his strong rugged self, perhaps, before he had, what he recommended to Paul Jones as preferable to a 'ceremonial funeral,' 'six feet of Scottish earth' in Ecclefechan churchyard. Even his bruit, once loud, will sink low.

But Carlyle was not, I think, desiring to detract from the fame of the man who was born within twenty miles of his own birthplace, and recognised him after the 'sea cock-fight' as cock of that watery walk.

Carlyle was too honest to bark at dead heels unless he had excellent cause ; and it is more in pity than in hatred that he deals with John Paul. But Carlyle was right in his summing-up moral : ' Such is life of sinful mankind here below.' What does it mean ? It means that for the sinful or not sinful the life here below is a grim struggle, and that not only, as in the case of John Paul, with winds and waves—when his intrepidity saved the *Ariel* from destruction and wreck on the Pennarque Rocks—but when in his various commands he had to fight not with the elements but with men. In all these human encounters—when he had to face men in mutiny, comrades in opposition, Courts with their cold-shoulder of closed doors—John Paul proved himself a man, a stubborn and sturdy Scotsman although he called himself an American citizen—a man with a will, and a conscience. And with such equipment a man can face the life of all sinful or innocent men here below. The hero is the man who can use winds for the purpose of his voyage, who can use men for the purpose of his objective, if the objective be a good and honourable one, as it was in the case of that homespun hero who had adopted America as his country and fought like a lion for his adopted parent. But this very adoption is an offence to some of those amongst us who hate their enemies. It was an offence which, after the recognition of the Independence of the United States by Great Britain, was forgiven to all those who had taken up arms against the ' sea of troubles ' with which the mis-governing of Great Britain had flooded her great colonies. But it was an offence which could not be forgiven to a captain who had invaded England at Whitehaven—who had, as they said, stolen Lord

Selkirk's spoons, had captured the *Drake* off Carrickfergus, and who had taken the *Serapis* on the high seas, with a valour which marked the man.

But in fighting men we have to use men as instruments, and the worst of Paul Jones's luck was that for the most part the human instruments with which he had to deal were like broken spears in his hands. Mr. Carlyle should recognise the invalidity of such human means, for he regarded the forty million men we have in this country as mostly fools. But Paul Jones had not only to encounter fools, but knaves. When he was on his first cruise in the *Ranger*, he had a disloyal lieutenant in Simpson, who like a plague-spot in the ship infected the crew with discontent which smouldered in disobedience, and that insubordinate officer had ultimately to be superseded in the command of the *Drake* and put under arrest.

But, again, what sort of men had he to deal with when he had his great adventure in the *Bonhomme Richard*? Mad traitors. The story of that hairbreadth excursion, in which against all odds Jones won the stakes of glory, is a bad romance. We remember that when the cranky *Bonhomme Richard*, with half her hull blown to pieces by the English guns, was at a death-struggle with the *Serapis*, Jones's colleague in the joint-stock command, on the *Alliance*, poured a broadside into the perishing but triumphant vessel. We remember too, with a glow of pride, when Paul Jones was face to face with death on an almost sinking ship, and Captain Pearson of the *Serapis* asked him 'Have you struck?' his audacious 'I have not yet begun to fight.' It was with such traitorous assassins as Landais that Paul Jones had to put to sea to harry the coasts of Britain—to attack vessels more than a match

for his 'cockered up' East Indiaman. But his bad luck in men followed him. When he was appointed to the Black Sea command by that curiously able strumpet, Catherine, he again encountered disloyalty and incompetence in Otto, Prince of Nassau, Alexiano, and the all-powerful Potemkine. All that he effected in the Euxine was in spite of these men, and not by their help ; yet owing to the squinting view of Catherine's favourite (he had lost one eye and the other looked over his nose) these men filched the credit of the victories which were won by Paul Jones, and were received at the Russian court, covered with honours, had estates and serfs handed over to them, while the real victor got a paltry decoration and then, on the excuse of a lying scandal, had the palace gates slammed in his face.

But notwithstanding all these disadvantages in men, John Paul Jones succeeded. He threatened and even put his foot in Whitehaven. He made Leith tremble in her sloppy shoes. He would but for chance have made havoc at Newcastle or Hull. He, although his ship was sinking, took the *Serapis* and ultimately sailed in her into the Texel. In the Liman, with an inferior fleet, and with about an equal flotilla, he beat the Turks, and would have had even greater success in these battles with the infidel had it not been for the idiocy of Nassau and Alexiano. These triumphs would have been sufficient to make the reputation of a great admiral, even if, in the enterprises he had been in, the best material that a nation could give had been given him ; but that he succeeded in spite of these undermining villainies, that is a double triumph. It is the same sort of credit that David got for killing the all-armed Goliath with a stone from a brook.

But Paul Jones, although he had these men stabbing him in the back, also had the art of turning a poor crew into good seamen. One of his most favourable biographers says that 'he was respected by his seamen, and not liked,' and seems to think that a kind of mild censure. But it is not. *Liked!* You don't *like* great captains. You can respect, admire, or worship them, but as for liking them, you cannot come close enough to them for affection! It would be easy, too, to show how the hate which Paul Jones had earned at the hands of the English frustrated his prospects at the court of Catherine. These soldiers of fortune who were serving in Russia resented, in their jealous patriotism, the presence of this distinguished Scotsman, and even threatened, it is said, to strike if he were to be put over them. It was this English enmity, partly national pride, which had been 'taken down a peg' by Paul Jones in his invasion of Cumberland and his great sea-fight in the North Sea, which was another of the unworthy drawbacks in his great career.

But what man has not such untowardness to fight against? And the man who in his compact person fights it out and triumphs deserves better than the neglect which has been his reward at the niggard hands of Britain.

Paul Jones's education at a dame-school had been as thrifty as his home surroundings, and equipped him poorly for the 'tasting of the world,' or for—what is a more accurate description—the tussling with circumstances in the great game of 'Catch who catch can.' Indeed he picked up in the world all he knew. His schooling was scanty, and when he was twelve (he was born in 1747) he crossed the Solway Firth with its prancing tides to Whitehaven,

and was bound apprentice to Younger, a merchant in the American trade, and almost immediately went to sea in the *Friendship* and made his first voyage with Captain Benson to the New World.

It is impossible here, in a chapter, to trace the history of his stormy life. Most of the painful parts of it are on undisputed record. Here we can only mention an episode or two.

Although the dame-school had taught him little he taught himself much, and proved himself an admirable letter-writer. Many of the letters that are preserved are excellent. The only very silly one was that which he wrote to Lady Selkirk in May 1778.

One of his detractors says of him : ‘ Whenever his private actions can be examined they must be pronounced dishonourable, and as to many others that appear to be so there is no evidence in favour except his own unsubstantiated and worthless testimony.’ This is all of a piece with the way John Paul has been treated by people in this country who would call themselves critics, but who are only vituperative calumniators. Paul Jones had an exceedingly candid pen. Far from being worthless testimony, any one who reads his life and his letters without the jaundiced eye of prejudice must come to the conclusion that John Paul was vain but capable, that he was honest and brave, that he did great work for the United States, and perpetrated the unforgivable mistake of flouting and discrediting Britain in her most sensitive of vanities—her ruling of the waves. Here is a document found amongst his papers which seems to us veracious :

‘ In 1775 J. Paul Jones armed and embarked in the first American ship-of-war. In the *Resolution* he had twenty-three battles and solemn encounters by sea ; made some

descents on Britain and her colonies ; took of her navy two ships of equal and two of superior force, many storeships and others. Constrained her to fortify her forts, suffer the Irish Volunteers, desist from her cruel burnings in America, and exchange prisoners of war, the American citizens taken on the ocean and cast into prisons of England as traitors, pirates, and felons.'

And for doing all this for the state to which he owed his duty he has been dubbed by us in England as a traitor, a pirate, and a felon himself.

We have said that the case, on these counts, against him fails.

After his strenuous fighting life he lived in retirement in Paris for two years at a time when the 'toil and trouble' of Revolution had turned the gay capital into a flaming hell. He made only one public appearance at that gloomy time, a time whose gloom was made lurid with nether flames, and that was on the occasion of the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille in July 1790. It was then that he was seen by Carlyle's historic eye, the ghost of himself, in the faded 'uniform,' and on that occasion he led the Americans and delivered an address to the Assembly. After that the public saw no more of him. He lived alone and he died alone, with his arms stretched out over his bed, and his knees bent, as some would suppose, to prayer. But God knows best. He was buried in a corner of a little cemetery reserved for Protestants, at the corner of the Rue de la Grange aux Belles and Rue des Ecluses Saint Martin, which was then a suburb and is now a thick coagulated town. The cemetery was closed to burials in 1793. But that was not the way the Americans last recognised John Paul Jones's genius, his courage and his services—and perhaps in that recognition have given him more

than his due of credit, by reason of the fact that in this country he was stinted and cheated of his fair share.

Since all the argle-bargling biographers have ceased, we have seen the United States go far out of her way to honour the memory of that dogged little Scotsman whose remains ought to have had six feet of Scottish earth, according to Carlyle, but which were, in fact, to be carried over the Atlantic to America with quite exceptional honour. On the 5th July 1905 a United States squadron, under the command of Rear-Admiral C. D. Sigsbee, arrived at Cherbourg to translate to America the remains of the naval hero, Paul Jones. Naval officers and special envoys, Mr. Lomas, and General Porter, United States ex-Ambassador in Paris, were fêted on that solemn-pageant occasion by the French Government, and five hundred marines escorted the poor remains from Paris to Cherbourg. It is not worth while following the steps of such memorial festivities. There was feasting, of course, and a religious service in the American church in the Avenue de l'Alma. The members of the Cabinet were present, the coffin, in front of the choir, was draped with the American flag. Then there were the eulogies. After the service a gun-carriage bore the coffin, and with the tramping feet of the marines and of French infantry the procession passed down the Champs Elysées, and across the Pont Alexander III. to a dais erected in full view of the dome of the Invalides. Here there were very vast crowds, and heaven was filled with loud cheering. At ten o'clock the special train which was to convey the coffin to the flagship *Brooklyn* left Paris.

There is only one incident of the day worth

dwelling upon, and a few words spoken about him by M. Paul Brousse, President of the Council, at the luncheon, that I would like to underline. He said :

‘ Let us believe that if ever—which seems impossible—you should hear from across the ocean the piercing cry of wounded France—of that France which is resolutely pacific in its Republican dignity—the gallant vessel of Paul Jones which went from France to America would return to Europe with a freight capable of coming to the rescue of her who watched over the cradle of your independence.’

The United States has heard the piercing cry of wounded France, the dying groans of a trampled-upon Belgium, but there is no ship, no Paul Jones that has come to the rescue.

Indeed, it appeared that the United States had been too busy making money out of the necessities of the Allies to think of such old-world debts of honour—too busy even to protest against the barbarities of a nation which has no bowels of compassion, no conscience, no regard for its own word or guarantee. That the United States, in her counting-houses and factories, has forgotten that France ‘watched by the cradle of her independence.’

In her lucrative neutrality she has forgotten more than that: in her scramble for gains she seems to have forgotten that the first duty of a nation is to protect the lives of its subjects, and if these subjects are done to death, to redress the wrong and prevent the repetition of such outrages. But the United States has forgotten the American citizens (it was John Paul’s proud boast even in his last will and testament that he was a citizen of the United States) who were murdered by Germany on board the *Lusitania* and the *Arabic*, and has contented herself with sending notes to Germany about these murders—

threatening, like the curate in the farce of *The Private Secretary*, 'a good hard knock'—but doing nothing to prevent the recurrence of such cold-blooded crimes. And the reason, no doubt, is that she is amassing enormous war profits. She has forgotten the gallant man who fought for her, and is 'too proud' to fight even for honour. It is a sorry plight for a great country!

Still there are not wanting signs that even the deep sleep of that great nation is troubled with dreams—dreams of what is due to civilization when a mad nation runs amuck upon the high seas. Already she has ceased to be on speaking terms with a nation of murderers. Has broken off diplomatic relations, and is upon the tardy way to resent the insults to her honour which have been heaped upon her—last of all by the sinking of the *Franconia*. No one could have spoken more temperate sense than President Wilson in the past, but the United States seems to feel now that it is a time to speak with other weapons than pen and tongue.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MY CURIOSITIES OF LITERATURE

Mistakes either of writer or printer sometimes humorous—‘Blindness of Milton’ printed ‘Blunders of Milton’—A question on a line of Stevenson’s—Scott’s ‘Caledonia’—Thomson’s tragedy of ‘Sophonisba’—Burns’s verses on ‘The sweet poet of the year’—Wrong punctuation of a quotation from Shakespeare—Milton misread—Prize poems, two quotations from—Lovelace’s lines misquoted—Hannah More’s popularity—Bulls in Parliament—Erroneous report of garden-party—Sir David Brewster’s one poem—The sun’s cheek.

IN reading, even in desultory reading, one occasionally comes across some incongruity, either a mistake of the writer or a misprint of the compositor, which brings out a sense entirely different from the real purport that the author had in view. These little incongruities are sometimes greeted with a passing smile, but are unfortunately quickly forgotten. It is only a few that have stuck like burrs to memory, and perhaps it is well, for while a few of such reminiscences might interest, if there were many of them they would undoubtedly pall.

Only the other day in correcting some proof sheets, where I had been referring to a poem on the ‘Blindness of Milton,’ the printers had got it the ‘Blunders of Milton.’ But the mistake was probably due not to any view of the printers as to *Paradise Lost*, but to my bad writing. Of course it was an intended joke when a lady told me she wished all parodies were ‘Parodies lost.’

But here is a 'curiosity' of literature. Robert Louis Stevenson had written in one of his poems the line

'The incomparable pomp of eve,'

and a would-be critic wanted to know whether he was speaking of Eve before or after the fall !

I think it was a veritable mistake—although it had, having regard to the Scotch climate, a semblance of truth in it—when Scott's lines :

'O Caledonia, stern and wild,  
Meet nurse for a poetic child,'

were printed

'O Caledonia, stern and wild,  
Wet nurse for a poetic child.'

James Thomson in his tragedy had this somewhat staggering line :

'O Sophonisba, Sophonisba O !'

Of course it was quite easy for his critic to go one better in his review by saying :

'O Jamie Thomson, Jamie Thomson O !'

But James Thomson was a great poet and his 'Seasons' a great poem, and it quite deserved the approbatory verses that Burns wrote of it. In Burns's poem, in the three or four first verses, he sketches the seasons with his incomparably graphic pen, and the poem ends with :

'So long, sweet poet of the year,  
Shall bloom the wreath thou well hast won,  
And Scotia with exulting tear  
Proclaim that Thomson was her son.'

But, would you believe it ? that when it came to be printed, the two last lines stood thus :

'And Scotia with exulting tear  
Proclaim that Tom's son was her son,'

which reduces the whole thing to the level of an affiliation case.

Of course when the quotation was made to read :

‘ There’s a divinity that shapes our ends rough.  
Hew them how we will,’

the real gist of the lines was considerably altered.

It is said, but I really do not know with what truth, that Milton was as much mauled as Shakespeare in the above quotation. Milton in *L’Allegro*, says :

‘ But come, thou goddess fair and free,  
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,’

and it is asserted that the last line was printed :

‘ In heaven she crept and froze her knee.’

Somewhere I came across what, I suppose it was humour, purported to be a quotation :

‘ To eat, to gorge, digest,  
Aye, there’s the rub.’

What dreams may come when we have shuffled off our waking consciousness !

Robertson of Brighton, before he went into the Church, was offered a commission in the Army ; and afterwards looked back with perhaps some regret on the way he had come, in preference to the way he might have gone. The Dean of Durham in his little book on Robertson says : ‘ Throughout his life, to adopt a picturesque phrase of his own, he seemed to feel the Queen’s “ broad arrow ” stamped upon him.’ I think it possible that the ‘ broad arrow ’ is stamped upon other articles belonging to the Government, but it is certainly oftenest seen and best known in connection with the clothes of convicts. And with that in mind the phrase does not seem so picturesque as the Dean thought.

But it is sometimes the author that makes the mistake, and there is a line in *Paradise Lost* which might come under the head of Milton's Blunders. Adam and Eve are going to partake of fruit—not the disastrous apple—and Milton has the reflection :

‘And while discourse they hold,  
No fear lest dinner cool.’

And a little lower he has :

‘So down they sat  
And to their viands fell.’

Aytoun, who was Professor of English Literature in the University of Edinburgh before David Masson, and who was himself a poet and wrote *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*, and with Sir Theodore Martin was joint-author of the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, had, when he was Professor, suggested ‘The River’ as the subject of the prize poem to the members of the class. He was found, by a friend, when he was reading the production of one who ought perhaps to have had the prize. He described the rise of the river in the hills, and I dare say—as a real poet had it—described it

‘making its ball of foam,  
Kissing the edge, and journeying on.’

But that part was not the best of the poem. He had come to the cataract, and it was here that the Professor was also in a cataract of laughter, for the poem thus described the waterfall :

‘The water, wildly leaping in mid-air,  
Left the astonished river's bottom bare.’

In another prize poem on Nebuchadnezzar, who as you remember was reduced to the eating of grass, these lines occurred. He

‘Said as he chewed the unaccustomed food,  
“It may be wholesome, but it isn't good.”’

Who was it that twisted Lovelace's lines to Lucasta, which run finely :

'I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honour more,'

into

'I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not Hannah More.'

Well, if Hannah More was not great, I believe she was good. And at one time she was a really popular writer. Her story of *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*—not the more famous shepherd of Dartmoor, who was a protégé of Mr. Winston Churchill—and *Two Wealthy Farmers* had, we were told, a sale of over two million copies. But it was not of these I was going to speak here. Speaking in another poem, of Joshua when he commanded the sun to stand still (he, and not Mr. Willett, was really the inventor of 'Daylight saving'), she announces that the sun

'Stupendously stood still.'

Now that must be a very difficult thing to do. Try even to sit still stupendously and you 'll have an idea of the difficulty!

Dr. Johnson said that 'inscriptions on tombstones should be in Latin, because being a dead language it will always live,' and although at first sight it reads like a 'bull,' there is some truth in it.

Talking of truth, who was it said that the motto ' "Leave well alone" must mean *the well* that truth is in ?'—but that seems to be indirect praise of mendacity.

Of course there is a famous 'bull' which was in that 'china shop' the House of Commons, when an honourable member, an authority on Indian affairs,

declared that the pale face of the British soldier was the backbone of our Indian army.

And I have somewhere seen, and I dare say this also blossomed at St. Stephen's, that, speaking of Ireland, an honourable gentleman said : 'Her cup of misery has been for ages overflowing, and it is not yet full.' Which tempts me to recall Sir Boyle Roche, but I will not yield to the temptation. The editor who reported that a certain garden-party had been a very 'infernal affair' corrected it the next day by saying he meant 'informal affair.'

Under the pretentious heading, 'Sir David Brewster's poetry,' there was a note that he had once been asked to write in a lady's album, and had refused on the ground that he was not a poet. But, being pressed, he wrote and signed with commendable succinctness :

'Phebe,  
You be  
Hebe.  
D. B.'

But I must cease to collect in this, my museum of 'curios.' Some one wrote, well enough :

'I like the cheek the Sun has kissed.'

But the flippant critic wrote on it :

'It 's like the cheek of the Sun to kiss it.'

## CHAPTER XV

### LECTURES

The 'Caudle Curtain Lectures'—Mechanics' institutes—Lectures in Scottish Universities—University Extension Lectures—Electric theatre competition—Lecture foundations—Lord Gifford's Trust Disposition and Settlement—The lecturers—The Bampton Lectures on Divinity—The Royal Institution Lectures—Davy, Faraday, Tyndall, Dewar, Rayleigh, Thomson—The Midland Institute—Carlyle's Lectures in Willis's Rooms—'On Heroes'—Leigh Hunt on—Lord Rectorship of Edinburgh University—The election of Lord Rector—Contest between Carlyle and Disraeli fought on political lines—Disraeli's committee—The Rectorial Address in the Music Hall—The lecture of a lifetime.

THERE was at one time an inordinate belief in the use of lectures. I am not referring to Douglas Jerrold's rather vulgar 'Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures' which appeared in *Punch*. In the Victorian era people seemed to think that progress was only possible and salvation only attainable by means of mechanics' institutes, which were established for the express purpose of providing taps which could be turned on and deluge the common people with information. Nowadays, so far as I can ascertain, mechanics' institutes have ceased to be, and have had to give place to their younger rival the cinema theatre, which, according to some, is a school of immorals.

But in my early days at the University the Scotch system of education was by means of lectures, and

the tutorial branch of education had not then taken root. Lectures on Logic, on Moral Philosophy, on Natural Philosophy, and on Belles-Lettres were the order of the day, and it is comparatively recently that tutoring has found its way in these northern homes of learning, in imitation of the scheme in existence at English Universities.

There are, I believe, still many courses of University Extension Lectures—or, at any rate, were before the war—which are delivered at various provincial centres; but from what I am able to ascertain the attendance at these is not large, and here also the electric theatre has taken the wind out of the sails of University extension, as extended by these tramp lecturers, and they have every chance of ceasing to sail or even possibly of going to the bottom. Of course there are still among us, as survival of the times when the lecture was more thought of than it deserved, certain foundations which provide for the delivery of certain lectures, and as the pious founders of these left money for the remuneration of the lecturer, these discourses are still delivered, often perhaps printed, and sometimes even read. George Herbert, if I remember aright, in one of his poems spoke in the person of some one on a sick-bed of those who visited the ailing, and said :

‘ You come to comfort us,  
Or to be comforted.’

So it is quite possible that it is more for the pleasure of the lecturer than of the listener that these lectures are scrupulously delivered.

One of these foundations was due to the certainly pious inclinations of a Scotch lawyer, Lord Gifford, who in his Trust Disposition and Settlement said :

‘ I, having fully and maturely considered my means and estate and the modes in which my surplus funds may be most usefully and beneficially expended, and considering myself bound to apply part of my means in advancing the further welfare and the cause of truth . . . and further, I, having been for many years deeply and firmly convinced that the true knowledge of God, that is, of the Being, Nature, and attributes of the Infinite, of the All, of the First and only Cause, that is the one and only Subject and Being ; and the true knowledge (not merely nominal knowledge) of the relations of man and of the Universe to Him, and of the true foundations of all ethics and morals—being, I say, convinced, etc., I have resolved from the “residue” of my estate as aforesaid to institute and found in connection, if possible with the Scottish Universities, lectureships or classes for the promotion of the study of the said subject and for the teaching and diffusion of sound views regarding them.’

As a consequence of his conviction and bequest we have had I don’t know how many courses of lectures with the view of promoting, advancing, teaching, and diffusing the study of Natural Theology, and these have been delivered at intervals by all sorts and conditions of men. The first to deliver a course of lectures according to Lord Gifford’s wish was Dr. Hutchison Stirling, and he has been followed by many others whose lectures I have not seen. I think Viscount Haldane delivered one or two courses under the bequest. Professor J. Arthur Thompson delivered a course, for I have by me a report of his ninth lecture on ‘The Issues of Life,’ and Mr. A. J. Balfour was, I think, the last Gifford Lecturer, and his lectures have been published during the last year. It would be interesting to ascertain whether these many, and sometimes curious contributions to ‘Natural Theology’ have had the effect that Lord Gifford hoped from them ; but any such examina-

tion of such teeming contributions would be far beyond the scope of my present intention.

Of course I have only used the Gifford bequest as an illustration of the lecturing mania which was an epidemic of the nineteenth century—a century which was under the impression that education and diffusion of knowledge by spoken words was the assurance for the progress of the race, a delusion which even a Gifford Lecturer, Mr. A. J. Balfour, in his address or lecture as Lord Rector of Glasgow University, has endeavoured to show—if I remember his rather pessimistic address aright—to be unfounded.

Of course the Bampton Lectures on ‘Divinity’ are more correctly described as lecture-sermons. They were founded by will, by the Rev. John Bampton, who died in 1751 and left £120 for the endowment, and have been more or less famous; and under these the shelves of pious libraries groan, just as some listeners yawned in Great St. Mary’s, for by the bequest thirty copies of the eight sermons have to be published within two months of their being preached, ‘at the expense of the estate.’

But passing from these subsidised lectures which ‘make for righteousness,’ there have been in this form, in the past, considerable contributions both to Science and Literature. The Royal Institution of Great Britain, a kind of superior and surviving mechanics’ institute, has belched lectures; and as many of its professors have been great men, like Davy, Faraday, Tyndall, Dewar, Rayleigh, Thomson, and others, some of these have been valuable additions to this country’s science. Of course, too, the Midland Institute at Birmingham, and the Philosophical Institution in Edinburgh, and similar institutions in some other towns, have still gone on

sowing these seeds, which fall for the most part on very unresponsive ground, or else among thorns which choke their promised growth.

Amongst these lectures—lecturers have had as much to say about literature as the others we have mentioned had to say about science, and occasionally these lectures have passed from the reading-desk into enduring literature—Carlyle lectured on German Literature in 1837 at Willis's Rooms, on 'The History of Literature or Successive Periods of European Culture,' and 'On Heroes and Hero Worship.' It is interesting to remember that Carlyle was not so much a lecturer—a reader of written speech—as an orator, the speaker of the word. For the first of these lectures he had prepared copious notes, intending to read them; but he lost his way in these, stumbled, and then put them aside and proceeded, as if he was a rock which had been struck by Moses' rod, and then he flowed on to the end without a stop to the gush of his oratory. 'He extemporises,' wrote Leigh Hunt in the *Examiner*. 'He does not read. We doubted on hearing Monday's lecture whether he would ever attain in this way the fluency as well as the depth for which he ranks among the celebrated talkers in private, but Friday's discourse relieved us. He strode away like Ulysses himself, and had only to regret, in common with his audience, the limits to which the hour confined him.'

But I am coming now to my own recollections of him, when he was installed as Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh. I forget who it was that passed a University Act under which the matriculated students of the Scotch Universities, once in every three years, chose a Lord Rector to represent them in the University Court. It must have been

some one obsessed with the nineteenth-century craze that representative government is the best of all governments, and that everything is all right with the world not because God's in His heaven, but because I have, with forty thousand others, a vote for one member of Parliament who is said to be my representative—although I have probably voted against him and given that precious thing, a cross, at the ballot to his opponent. What good it can do a student at a university to have a vote for the Lord Rector I have never been able to determine. At the same time I am certain that the election of a Lord Rector introduces boys too soon into the political arena—a place which is none of the cleanliest—and makes them adopt 'a side' or a party in politics before they have any but the crudest ideas as to politics or their meaning. The election at which Mr. Carlyle was elected and Mr. Disraeli rejected was fought out by the students upon political grounds—and that, of course, raised quite a wrong issue. It was quite a mistake, but we were Whigs and Tories. The chairman of Disraeli's committee, of which I was a member, was Stormonth-Darling (afterwards a Lord of Session), and with him were associated J. P. B. Robertson (afterwards Lord Robertson), Lauder Brunton, Colin Macrae, Moir, and ten or eleven other Conservatives. The election took up all our attention for about ten days, which might have been better given to the learning we came to the University to acquire. There were all the usual tricks and treacheries of an ordinary election. There were lampoons. On one side they called out 'Old Clo!' because Disraeli was a Jew: on the other they retaliated 'Old Clo!' because Carlyle had written *Sartor Resartus*. Some spirited verses were written

on both sides. Carlylese, which was easily written, was used to ridicule the Sage of Chelsea. All this silly hubbub resulted—I think now luckily, although I did not think so then—in the election of Thomas Carlyle, and it was when he came to be installed as Rector that we students heard the lecture of our lives. The wonder was that the noise of the cheers of the boys, with their hoarse guttural voices and the shuffling and stamping of their big clod-hopping feet, did not lift the roof off the Music Hall. The enthusiasm was a hurricane of sound. I have seen somewhere that on that occasion he was clothed upon with a Rectorial gown, with frogs and tassels, and that before rising to address us he let it fall from the shoulders which had already shrugged off an LL.D.-hood offered to him by the University, and stood like any common man to talk sense to a lot of common youths. I did not see these antics. I was too interested in the man, with his face which was deep carved with thought and even with the lines of sorrow which come with it—a face which, like aqua fortis, bit its way into memory—and a manner which was like the country which had borne and bred him—a little rough and uncouth, but with thought and words which came from an earnest soul and pondering head. Of course that lecture is or can be known to every one. To begin with, he told us that he had tried to write a speech for us but abandoned it. And there he stood without notes, speaking with his lips and his eyes, and impressing the wax of our youth as few ever had done or could have done. There is or there was, a strong feeling in Scotland against ministers who 'turn the leaf,' or in other words read their sermons. If it is a prejudice, it is, I think, a justifiable one. A man should speak

to people from his heart, and not from his paper. Besides, a man who has his eye on a page is docking himself of half his means of expression. When you speak to a man you look at him, and the eye helps the lips. But if you have your eyes glued to your manuscript you are not *en rapport* with your audience. Carlyle understood the first duty of an orator, which is to speak to the people. You feel the man through his speech. And, after all, a *man* is God's messenger to men.

There was even humour in some of his earnest words—when he bated his natural breath and changed the word 'fools,' which he had meant, into the milder 'foolish persons.' But I am not reporting his lecture, but referring to a memory which has not been without its inspiration for me and for many others who heard him on that memorable occasion.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CONVERSATION

‘A speaking animal’—Education a drawing out—Conversation is education—Man a social animal—Kinds of conversation—Argument one of these—Heat and light—Good talkers I have known—The atmosphere of conversation—Must not be a monologue—A quiet, slow speaker who used the right words, but could listen too—Ben Jonson and Shakespeare at the Mermaid Tavern, described by Fuller—What Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare—Pedantry in conversation—Anecdotes, how to be used in conversation—Lord Chief-Justice Coleridge a raconteur—A modern ‘Joe Miller’—His Address at the Philosophical Institution, Edinburgh—Some neat sayings—But story-telling is not conversation—Mr. Finlason, a storehouse of stories—His book on the Jamaica Case—Mr. Richard Harris, joint-author of *Lord Brampton’s Life*—Memory and imagination.

‘MAN,’ according to Hobbes, ‘is a rational animal because he is a speaking animal,’ and a child’s first step towards rationality is speech. There is no finer art than that of conversation—indeed all the other arts are founded on and only branches of that main trunk—the communication of one’s thoughts to others by means of speech, and the drinking at other fountains of the living waters of conversation. A man is really only half a man when he is shut up in the closet of himself. He is in a finer matrimony when he is in converse with another or with others. Education is the drawing out of a man’s nature, however much people have mistaken the matter by thinking that education is stuffing a man with forced meat like a chicken, and it cannot be drawn out

in any better way than in conversation. Indeed conversation is the best of education. The child's first babbling efforts are echoes of what others say; and when it can imitate articulate sounds, it is emerging from the womb of silence and being born again. Some men pretend to recluseness, and Cicero said, 'When I am alone I am least alone.' But I think he was a prig and put too high an estimate on the value of his own company. The fact is that even in our studies we are only recounting past converse or thinking of things we will say in the future. But conversation is society and man is a social animal, and when he is with his fellow-men even if the tongue should be silent the eyes and the features speak.

Without conversation society or friendship were impossible. The only way we really know our friends is when they 'stand and deliver' on the highway. It is true, too, that conversation is also for our enemies, but it is the dregs we keep for them—indeed so poor are the rinsings of the mind that hate has recourse to the non-dictionary words which we call oaths, and even then our anger splutters and does not talk. Of course love itself is conversation. There is no stop to the gallop of lovers' tongues, and although when overheard it may all seem to be about nothing, it is about the best of things—and that is the feelings of two human hearts.

We have, of course, noted a dozen different kinds of conversation. Argument is one of them, and men fight with words instead of swords. The duel has gone out, but the dialogue is left to us, for we must still cross swords, or words, with somebody. It is possible, notwithstanding Shakespeare's idea, that 'rightly to be great is not to stir without great argument,' that he meant by argument 'consideration';

for argument very often leads to more heat than light—although, as even the savage nations know, both heat and light are produced by rubbing two dry sticks together. If men would confess it, they owe much to conversation—indeed it is a realer thing than books, for books are only written when men are debarred the readier, the finer expression of clashing words.

I have known a certain number of good talkers in my time: some who were as full of information as a dictionary, some so full of lively light that the conversation flashed like summer lightning.

It is perhaps a kind of breach of copyright to try to reproduce conversations, but the copyright is preserved because it is impossible to reproduce them. The conversation depends for its excellence, not on the words actually spoken, but upon the atmosphere in which the conversation took place—to understand the words you must know the men. Besides there is another difficulty about reporting a real conversation. It is not a monologue, and belongs to more than one speaker. To be real conversation there must be more than one contributory to the treasury. All that we can retain of a good conversation is an uncommunicable memory of it. I knew one quiet, slow speaker. He had what Browning ascribed to Napoleon :

‘A prone brow  
Oppressive with his mind,’

but his face, although rugged, was as bland as a spring day with quiet sunlight in it. He was an interesting man to talk to, and his words hit things. A great high-shouldered hill which he could see from his window was to him like a ‘great stranded whale,’ while one at the other end of the valley, which was

azure blue and pointed, was 'an ethereal hill.' He had what some one said Milton had, 'the unique word for things, the word that is a discovery.' His speech was as rugged as the hills, but it grew harebells. He pointed to a place which was called 'Faldoun-side' and explained it as the record of a landslip; another place called 'Blawlowne,' which translated means 'blow softly,' as he said the name tells you of a shelter, a 'beildy bit.' Lumbago he referred to as a 'commanding pain.' 'Why,' he asked me once, 'is the carrying of a lap-dog by a lady a mark of distinction, while the carrying of a woman's own baby is only taken as a mark of inferiority?' He spoke of one man who had a 'head cool as an alp,' and described the gentleman who was Member of Parliament for his town thus: 'Mr. ——. Yes, he is a fluent talker. If you put a piece of soap about the size of a pea in a churn and churn it, it froths and foams till you think that all the world is in the box, but it is only the little bit of soap after all.' I think he called Carlyle a great transcendental snob. He spoke once of 'tempest-crested waves.' And of children

'Spilling laughter from their thriftless eyes.'

But I am not certain that that was not a line taken from one of his own poems. Talking of these, isn't the simple line:

'Where lies the golden sunlight on the grass,'  
as good as Wordsworth's equally simple line:

'And all the sweetness of a common dawn.'

But I am, as I said, trying to do the impossible, to reproduce the effect of a conversation.

Another man I knew who was as quick with his words as a fencer. He did not so much speak as flash. There is in my memory Fuller's fanciful

description of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson at the Mermaid Tavern, which was written in 1652: 'Many were the hot combats between him and Ben Jonson, which two I beheld like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war: Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in performance: Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but light in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention.' And I have compared in my thought the two talkers I have referred to, to these 'leviathans afloat.' Ben Jonson, in his *Discoveries*, says of Shakespeare, after such praise as is seldom heard and almost never deserved, that he honoured 'his memory on this side idolatry as much as any,' that sometimes it was 'necessary he should be stopped.' That is the 'spate' conversation of the active mind and ready tongue, and I have known men who in these qualities reminded me of the indomitable talker of the Mermaid Tavern.

I know, or have known, some gentlemen who are poor pedants in conversation, and whose conversation is a thin solution of the books they have read, which they decant from a magnum of memory. Some men pelt you with quotations, but a mere walking library is a poor companion when you want a man whose quality is that he is 'all there,' living in the present with thought for the occasion, and not making the burdened back of the horse bear a load of books. Still I would rather suffer the pedantic recollections of such a man than the story-telling of others who expect each anecdote to be welcomed with a grin. Conversation, to be good, must have the merit of thought, and your anecdote may be of

use to the thinker, but it ought never to usurp the place of serious thought or spontaneous humour. Merely to empty the pockets of memory is a poor compliment to the person you are talking to—if you have a heart and a head, for these are better than mere recollections. Lord Coleridge—the Lord Chief-Justice—was a tall, willowy man with a big bone dome of a head, with a sleek manner and a mellow speech which seemed to insinuate itself into the ear. He was, too, a man of great ability and could have done better things if he had tried, but in conversation he kept the ear of the dinner-table with his stories—good stories, well told and very seldom repeated—as if he had a monopoly. He usurped our ears for a jest-book, and it is a poor occupation, the compilation over ‘the walnuts and the wine’ of a modern ‘Joe Miller.’ Indeed it is an illustration of what is *not* conversation. But while I have referred to his unfailing repertory of stories, these have, perhaps luckily—although they elicit the obsequious smile of the moment—no permanent place in a busy memory. One tries to measure men by their better efforts. When he was Sir John Duke Coleridge he addressed the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh upon one occasion, and I have read what he said there. He began by telling his audience that ‘nothing seems left to say, yet it is the irony of the situation that something must be said.’

He went on to talk about a spurious and a real classical education, about a love of nature, a study of English classics and the consolation of these to the old, justifying his remark that ‘something must be said.’ No one, I am certain, could say nothing better. His address was really nothing but common-places uncommonly well put. In the course of it he

said, 'Every man has a tendency to become narrow in mind and thin in intellect,' and I hope I wasn't spiteful when I was reminded by that sentence of Sir John himself. But he put one or two points with his usual mellifluous neatness. 'Boyhood, youth, and early manhood were, in fact, consumed with most of us not in acquiring any real or competent acquaintance with Greek or Latin literature, but in carefully abstaining from the attempt to acquire anything else.' And again he said: 'Many men are incapable of much; they are born, they exist, they die commonplace, with aims, feelings, desires, pleasures, commonplace like themselves:

'They eat, they drink, they sleep, they spend,  
They go to church on Sunday,  
And many are afraid of God,  
And most of Mistress Grundy.'

I don't know whether he borrowed or invented these lines, but I have said enough of his nice anaemic phrases and polished 'commonplace.'

It is sometimes a little sad to know that people who can talk well miss, as the Lord Chief-Justice did, the point of conversation, which is that it is a game which must be played by more than one, and are content if they can find listeners for their monologue. It is clever of a juggler to keep up three or four balls or flashing knives in the air, but it is only a trick; and for the game at ball there must be a give and take, and so it is with conversation. But your monologist is only a juggler with words and keeps these whirling in the air, to his own satisfaction and possibly to the astonishing of an audience with dropping jaws.

Mr. W. F. Finlason—who reported in the Courts for the *Times* for many years, and was after his death a well-remembered figure there, with his swart hair,

his shaggy eyebrows—was a teller of stories, and was indeed believed to have compiled a book of these, which was always about to be published but has never seen the light or moved our laughter. Finlason wrote and published a book, *A History of the Jamaica Case*—which I reviewed somewhere—in which he as a careful juryman found 'No Bill' against Governor Eyre, or, in Carlyle's words, that he merited 'for his strong measures' honour and thanks and wise imitation should similar emergencies arise.' Finlason told his stories well, with some fire in his narrative, and it is a pity that his laudable intention as to a published jest-book was never carried out. Mr. Richard Harris, Q.C.—who wrote *Hints on Advocacy* and edited, with Lord Brampton, *Lord Brampton's Life, or Remembrances*—was a great talker, and brimful of stories of people, some of which he related with dramatic ability. But he never quite understood the difference between conversation and buffoonery. I have mentioned these talkers not as masters of conversation, but as instances of men with some ability and some humour, who had chosen the unwise course of being parrots instead of men, and of relying upon the anecdote of memory instead of the wit of the nonce. It is the last of these that is the real spice of conversation. Story-tellers should remember what some one said, that a joke is a bad investment. If you make it you lose the principal; if you don't you lose the interest. But George Meredith is right when he assures us that 'a good joke is not always good policy.'

## CHAPTER XVII

### MAD POETS

A heckler at a political meeting—Madness and genius said to be allied—‘Mad’ doctors think most people mad—‘There is nothing like leather’—Article in *Journal of Psychological Medicine* made most of our poets out to be mad—Alfieri, Beattie, Chatterton, Coleridge, Collins, Cowper, Ferguson, Nat Lee, Swift, Tannahill, Tasso, E. A. Poe, Lloyd, Rousseau, Schiller, and Charles Lamb—Vice and insanity—Weight health—Charles Lamb—Almost a Templar—The tragedy—The asylum at Hoxton—Mary Lamb—Charles Lamb’s letter to Coleridge—Sonnet to his sister—My recollection of Hoxton House Asylum—Henry Scott Riddle, shepherd and song-writer—A ‘teachable temper’—His ‘Scotland Yet’ good patriotism but not the best poetry.

I was born in Dumfriesshire when my father, Dr. W. A. F. Browne, was in medical charge of the Crichton Royal Institution, a Chartered Hospital for the Insane. Once at a political meeting in the county in 1906 a heckler who knew something of my history asked if it was not the fact that I had been born in a lunatic asylum? That, I think, was regarded as very much of a home-thrust by my political opponents, but I was able to answer:

‘Yes, it is true I was born in a lunatic asylum, but I was discharged cured. If you had been born there you would have been there yet.’

Perhaps it was because I was, in my early years, in a sense connected with the insane that made me take an interest in the mad folk in literature. That genius and madness are allied I deny, but that some

geniuses have been mad is an undoubted fact, for genius unfortunately does not exempt its possessors from the ordinary 'ills that flesh is heir to.'

But there is one thing that every casual reader must be on his guard against, and that is the rather sweeping views that 'mad' doctors and alienist physicians entertain, that almost everybody is insane and that it is right to hold every man mad until he is proved sane. This is quite a natural generalisation, like that of the shoemaker who holds that 'there is nothing like leather.'

I came across once, in *A Journal of Psychological Medicine* of long ago, two articles on 'Mad Poets.' There, in that Madame Tussaud's waxwork of eccentric genius, I found references to Alfieri, Beattie, (the amicable author of the forgotten *Minstrel*, who by the way, in his *Essay on Truth*, was at the time thought by some as weak-minded as himself to have refuted Hume), Chatterton, Coleridge, Collins, Cowper, Ferguson, Nat Lee, Lloyd, E. A. Poe, Rousseau, Schiller, Swift, Tannahill, Tasso, and Charles Lamb. The writer had in some instances mistaken mere badness for madness, and confused a vice with an insanity. Yet I believe the writer was an eminent physician who had been connected with the care and cure of the insane. I am personally a little sceptical as to the cure of the insane. Many persons are put under healthy conditions and the obscuration of the intellect passes. I remember one 'mad' doctor who thought he was producing a curative effect if his weighing machine showed that the patient was gaining weight, and who used to say with an endeavour at wit, 'Look after the pounds and the "mens" will look after itself.'

But of all these I have mentioned it was the

indubitable case of Charles Lamb that interested me, not only because *Elia* had interested me many times, but because I had visited the scene of a part of his tragedy in Hoxton House. Most of his story is quite well known, and he has told some of it himself. His birth in Crown Office Row in the Temple we know of. His schooldays at Christ's Hospital are recorded with the playfulness which characterised most of his writings. He was a clerk in the India House, where he made up for going late in the morning by leaving early in the afternoon. Then his poor mad sister Mary killed her mother with a carving-knife, and instead of sending the poor mad woman to an asylum—asylums were only more haggard prisons in those days—she was handed over to the custody of Charles, who, except when she had to go to Hoxton House when a fit was coming on, lived with her the whole of his life. Here is tragedy! Insanity with a knife placed under the care of another intellectual cripple! And to see the two walking over the fields to Hoxton when the wild beast in the woman began to growl is one of the most pathetic visions in all literary history. It is said too, for we must sup full of horrors, that in after life when the brother and sister went out of town there was a strait-waistcoat amongst the clothes in Mary's box.

But the tragedy was not played out, for in 1795-6 Lamb himself was mad, and was in that Hoxton House Asylum for six raving weeks. This is the way he speaks of the clouded episode in a letter to Coleridge :

‘ I know not what suffering scenes you have gone through at Bristol. My life has been here somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and began this,

your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a mad-house at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now and don't bite any one. But mad I was ! and many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume if all were told. My sonnets I have extended to the number of nine since I saw you, and will some day communicate to you. I am beginning a poem in blank verse, which if finished I publish. . . . The sonnet I send you has small merit as poetry ; but it will be curious to read it when I tell you it was written in my prison house in one of my lucid intervals.'

*To my Sister.*

If from my lips some angry accents fell,  
Peevish complaint, or harsh reproof unkind,  
'Twas but the error of a sickly mind  
And troubled thoughts, clouding the purer well  
And waters clear of Reason ; and for me  
Let this my verse my pure atonement be—  
My verse, which thou to praise were e'er inclined  
Too highly, and with partial eye to see  
No blemish. Thou to me didst ever show  
Kindest affection, and would oftentimes lend  
An ear to the desponding, love-sick lay,  
Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay  
But ill the empty debt of love I owe,  
Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

Now for my own recollection of Hoxton House, where Charles Lamb had the lucid interval in which he mosaiced the stained glass of his sonnet. My remembrance of that asylum is of it as it was forty years ago—inspected and visited, even at that time, by Commissioners in Lunacy. But my recollections can still make me shudder and wonder how any lucid intervals could occur within its dim walls. Of course the fields over which the Lambs used to walk to the asylum at Hoxton are now almost in the centre of that brick Sahara, London. But it is the place itself that gives me a bad memory. I had a friend who was medical superintendent of that asylum,

a hospitable man with thin side-whiskers and a swithering manner, and I have dined in Charles Lamb's 'prison house' upon several occasions. But what a place it was! Hoxton itself is a rickle of a town, and Hoxton House Asylum was a rickle of a building. You entered it from a narrow street, where the squalid houses on the opposite side frowned at you entering. Then behind the medical superintendent's rooms—which I dare say were comfortable enough, although they might have been cleaner, and had a mahogany gloom about them—were some labyrinthine yards, a hall or room where upon occasion the patients were supposed to be amused by stage plays by amateurs, who practised on the feeble-minded, or where on other occasions dances were held to music which seemed itself a little insane.

How Charles Lamb ever got better in such a place it is impossible to say; and in that congeries of rotten buildings, grimed with the smoke which in Hoxton does not go up but comes down, his lucid interval of which he speaks must have been a very Scotch mist of a light. Poor Charles Lamb had a stammer in his speech, and his mind hesitated between the clear articulation of health and the maundering of disease. I could weep when I think of sensitive folk like Charles and Mary Lamb in a place such as Hoxton House was when I knew it. But I dare say it was worse in their dark days.

In my youth I met Henry Scott Riddle, the writer of various songs that had considerable popularity and were sung in many a kitchen and house-place in the lowlands of Scotland. He began life as a shepherd in Teviotdale, but with a fine appetite for fame went to Biggar to school himself, and thence to Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities. He had

indeed what another Scotsman prayed for, a 'teachable temper.' He became a minister, and 'wagged his head in a pulpit.' When I saw him he had the gnarled face of a rough peasant, but with an eye which spoke fire. It is curious to note how those who, like Hogg and Riddle, have been in the silent nursery of the hills of sheep, aspire to sing like larks. He used in his young herding-days to carry his poems in his hat or bonnet, and one day the rough Border wind blew off his hat and, as he said, 'published' some of his poems. Indeed some of his satirical verses, thus disseminated, got him into trouble with his neighbours, but I think also got him some local fame. The songs best known in my days that he gave to the winds of popularity were 'Scotland Yet,' 'The Wild Glen sae Green,' and 'The Crook and Plaid.' 'Scotland Yet' owed its popularity as much to its patriotic national pride as to its poetry, but for that matter so does Burns's 'Scots, wha hae,' in which the best line is

' See the front of battle lour.'

Riddle suffered, as some poets have, from a mental depression which removed him from the pulpit and justifies us in having mentioned him under the heading of 'mad poets.' I think it was some luck in my young days that I met shepherd songsters who

' Sang but as the linnet sings.'

The twittering, chirping sparrow has as much pleasure in his fragment of a lay as the lark in his fluttering carol.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### WRITING

Writing and accuracy—If you have to review you ought to read—Reading as a pastime—Reading for improvement—Reading for interest—Focused attention—Mine not an idle pen—Wrote reviews and articles, and wrote and published some sixty-one law and other books—My ‘joy rides’ on my pen—Writing with an eye to readers—Looking forward—Harmless employment—‘Knowledge is power’—Knowledge is for life—Men are meant to live, not merely to know—The sublime of human life—Tales of love.

THERE is one good about writing, and that is that it makes a man, as Bacon says, accurate. It is quite true that some author—we have the authority, I think, of *Punch*—said: ‘I don’t read books, I write them’; and that may be a policy which will do for some, but it won’t do for a reviewer of books or a writer of political articles. If you are asked to review Leslie Stephen’s *Life of Fawcett* you must, if you have even the shadow of a conscience, read it.

It was in this way that in my earlier years I read a great many books, and read them usefully: for there are many kinds of reading. If you read for mere amusement or pastime, you are wasting your time and unjust to the book. But if you read with the intention ‘of well and truly trying,’<sup>1</sup> and ‘giving a true verdict according to the evidence, so help you

<sup>1</sup> I somewhere said, and I repeat it because it seems true: ‘Read for “improvement” and you have no interest. Read for “interest” and you have improvement.’

God'—and that was the form of the old jury oath in courts—then you have to bring a focused attention to the page, and it deserves that: and it is good for you to have an attention that can be focused, and not one that goes scattering its light like a stable lantern from its guttering intelligence.

I am far from thinking that the man who is always considering his self-improvement is an agreeable person, any more than a guest would be who is always looking at his food with a selfish reference to indigestion or dyspepsia. It is a good thing to go on improving, but the man who makes that the object of his life is only a selfish egotist. The man who does not think of himself but of others is likely to get more education out of his actions than the man whose self-reference is the mainspring of his conduct.

Now even the drudgery work of reviewing has excellent educational results on a man who will put a 'stiff back,' as the Scotch say, 'to a steep brae.' It would ill become me here to give a list of my contributions to reviews and newspapers, but I look back upon the time I was reading for and writing these as days which did not, in Carlyle's words in one of his half-dozen poems, 'slip useless away.' But in order that the reader may know that I had not an idle pen, I may confess that not long ago I counted the books I had written and published. They include law books, political books, books of criticism, and books of other descriptions (most of these were published anonymously, and I am not going to let the cat out of the bag here); but leaving out all the reviews, etc., that I have been referring to, I found I had given, to possibly an ungrateful public, about sixty books altogether. Some were large,

some were small, perhaps most of them insignificant, and one of them was even translated into Danish.

But returning to my reviewing days, a time came when such regular employment in literature was incompatible with my work at the Bar. I had to keep my pen for a 'joy ride' in my holidays, and just as in my early holidays after I had become fairly successful I had a cob or pony which I rode with exulting excitement in my long vacation—sometimes even shouting as if I were charging an enemy when I was only cantering down a quiet road or country lane where the hoofs drummed rhythmically—so in these holidays I rode my pen at a gallop, sometimes almost as exultingly, and mentally shouting down the green lanes and unfrequented highways of literature. But, as I say, many of these holiday excursions were published. I have a shelf of them, and most of them were, for professional reasons and not from modesty, published under a pen-name. I will observe the same reticence with regard to these famous gallops of a flying pen here as on their blank title-pages. I am not writing an advertisement of these books, but am merely putting on paper some recollections of literature and of my feeble efforts in that great direction.

But without saying what I wrote I may say a word in favour of writing. It was said by Heine that 'when a woman writes a novel she has one eye on the paper and the other on some man—except the Countess Hahn-Hahn, who has only one eye.' But every one who writes has an eye on the distant, sees a vista through his page—it may be the expected triumph of to-morrow or next year, or perhaps further, the appreciation of a just posterity. But that hope is itself a gain. A man who can look

forward, instead of having a methodist eye on the navel of to-day, is on his way to improvement. The man who can see forward is something of a prophet or a seer.<sup>1</sup> It was Dr. Johnson who said that a man was harmlessly employed when he was making money—which is a large apology for the Jews—but as a rule a man is not only harmlessly, but well employed if he is writing.

At the same time the pen is 'flightier' than the sword, and as it is only the understudy of the tongue, it can do harm if the hand that holds it has not got a conscience.

There was a time when people regarded 'knowledge' as a kind of god. If I remember aright, Bulwer founded one of his novels on the dictum that 'Knowledge is power.' This result was brought about by the fact that most of our education is mainly learning from books ('book learning' the Scotch call it), and it is because books are our preceptors that so many people take to the emulative production of writings. But it is for life, as Bergson pointed out, 'that knowledge exists,' and knowledge is of no use unless like food it can be used for the purpose of living more. A man, as many have seen, is much more than a pedant, and a human being more than a professor. It is no use having your knowledge in a dungeon: it was meant to go about, and it is very largely by means of the pen that it has its peregrinations in the world of men; but even then the publicity is not to be the goal but the means to betterment, and it has to be noted that the pen has too frequently been a means to pride rather than

<sup>1</sup> I like to quote myself in a note. It looks important. I once said: 'A poet is a seer—a prophet is a foreseer—a historian a hindseer. But they all see ghosts.'

improvement. The literary man holds himself high in his pulpit, but in this he is overlooking the fact that it is not by books but by life that a man is tried and tested.

Burns, when he said

‘To make a happy fireside clime  
    To weans and wife,  
That’s the true pathos and sublime  
    Of human life,’

may have been regarded as vulgarly domestic, but he was speaking the true sense of the whole matter. Living is better than writing. It is Claude Melnotte in the *Lady of Lyons* who says to Pauline: ‘We’ll read no books that are not tales of love.’

But that is nonsense. *First*, because lovers don’t want to read books about love, if the dried-up spinsters do; and *second*, that it is not tales of love that are the object of life, but loving, as Burns saw.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BOOKS AND ART

Books for reading—Handsome bindings—First editions 'uncut'—My first copy of Milton cost tenpence, Shelley and Burns about one shilling each—A first edition of Allan Ramsay—Ben Jonson's Works, showing Will Shakespeare as one of the players—Richard Burbage—His epitaph—The *Anatomy of Melancholy*—How Burton made himself cheerful—'Happy as kings'—First edition of *Waverley*, and first edition of *Kenilworth*—I read with a pencil—A crutch to memory—Books of reference—Reading the Dictionary—A delusion as to Jews which came from not reading the Dictionary enough—*Century Dictionary* and *Punch*—The art of skimming or 'dipping'—The cheap books of to-day—Was an art critic in a way—Criticised the Royal Academy and Old Masters—Books to read and pictures to look at, not to boast about—Misunderstanding about art—Pictures with a story—Pictures with art.

I HAVE books, but they are for reading and not for looking at. Many a library is a museum of handsome bindings, or a curiosity shop of first editions 'uncut,' for even the cutting of the edges takes from the auction value of such treasures. But I have none of these. I have a better edition now, but for years my own edition of Milton was one published by Milner and Sowerby, Halifax, and purchased by me for tenpence or one shilling. Unfortunately now the binding has come away from the book, but I give you my word it is because it has been used. There might be alternative explanations of such an occurrence—either it has been well read or badly bound. My first copies of Shelley's *Choice Poems* and of

Burns were procured upon a similar commercial basis. But it is the fact that I have a first edition of Allan Ramsay's Poems, and an interesting book which I think must be a second edition of Ben Jonson's Works, for it is dated 1640, and I find that prefaced to *Every Man in his Humour* there is a statement that the principal comedians were 'Will Shakespeare,' etc., and that it was first acted in 1598 with the allowance of the Master of the Revels. Shakespeare's name, too, appears before another of the plays as 'one of the principal tragedians.' The name, however, of Richard Burbage appears before most of the plays, and who was no doubt, notwithstanding his stoutness, worthy of the poetical elegy on him which some one wrote, if I remember aright, in eighty-six verses, but of which I only remember one :

' He 's gone, and with him what a world is dead.'

The epitaph upon him is short and easily remembered :

' Exit Burbage.'

I have, too, a second edition, revised and enlarged, of that strange book the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. It is said that Burton was himself a melancholic, and that the way he chased

‘loathed melancholy  
Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born’

away was by going to the bridge-foot to hear the ribaldry of the bargemen, which, it is said, 'rarely failed to throw him into a violent fit of laughter.' If swearing is a specific for melancholia we need none of us be sad, but I think R. L. Stevenson's prescription for cheerfulness is better than Burton's recourse

to such rowdy physicians, for he says in *A Child's Garden of Verse*:

‘The world is so full of a number of things,  
That I think we should all be as happy as kings.’

But of my books, I have mentioned those only to show the poverty of my shelves of those works which constitute a ‘library,’ as distinguished from a small collection of good books to be loved and read. But, by the way, I forgot a treasure. About a couple of years ago a ‘first edition of *Waverley*’ was sold in a London auction for £200. I have a first edition of *Kenilworth*, published in 1821, and I naturally thought my fortune was made, and I looked at the brown backs of the three plain volumes with the eye of a miser, until in a catalogue which some bookseller sent me I saw he was offering a first edition of *Kenilworth* for eight shillings, and then I wakened from my dreams of avarice.

But it would be useless for me to have a collection of first editions of books which are prized for their outsides, for I read with a pencil. Whether it was a habit acquired at the Bar, from the reading and marking of briefs with a blue or a red pencil, I do not know, but I have always found that a pencil is of much use in reading and allows the eye, returning to the page, to seize at once what impressed one at the first reading. Of course such a practice, which is a crutch to memory, would spoil any book for other readers, although to me the markings are an invitation to return to those old haunts. But books are the seed of books, and very often the hand is not content with a pencil but itches for the pen ; at other times, as some one observed, ‘a book in the hand is an excuse for idle thinking,’ and many a man finds the page a stepping-stone to reverie.

Of course while books are for reading, as I have said, when one is in the country there is a class of books that are not quite for reading, and that is books of reference. These are invaluable. I have—I do not know how many—encyclopædias and dictionaries, and although these are primarily works to be consulted—like lawyers when you are in a fix—there is, if you have some patience, excellent reading even in a dictionary. I once, when in Lanarkshire, was taken to visit a man who was a pauper lunatic, who was said to be 'a great reader,' and when I inquired of him what he read he informed me that it was the *Dictionary*. I asked him how he liked it, and he said, 'Fine,' with a perfectly judicious comment that 'it changed the subject unco often.'

One of that poor man's supposed delusions was, I believe, not an insanity but a misunderstanding. He believed and said that 'they were all Jews in Arran,' which, if it had been true, might have led to anti-Semitic 'affairs.' But he assured me that he had heard it from the minister, and that he seemed to think the next thing to 'the word of God.' But upon inquiry I think it would be found that the minister in question had, in chiding his congregation for the rejection of Christ from the conduct of their lives, told them they had, as it were, crucified Him again, and that they were 'arrant Jews.' The poor man had not read his *dictionary* enough.

But you never can tell where that art of reading will lead you. A minister took pains to teach an illiterate parishioner his ABC, and soon he became fairly proficient, with a finger guiding an unsteady eye. So much so that when the minister asked the man's wife if he could read the *Bible* yet, she

said : ' Hoot ; he 's oot o' the Bible and into the newspapers.'

But with reference to my books of reference, I admit I was the dupe of one of the greatest literary tricks of the age. I had, through the *Times*, purchased the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, in a revolving bookcase also supplied by the leading journal, and then in a year or two I found I had to buy eleven or twelve more volumes to bring the colossal information up to date. Still, I think I am indebted to the *Times* for the *Century Dictionary*, and the first twenty-five volumes of *Punch*, also a valuable book of reference.

One of the evils of the time is that there are more books and less reading than there ever was before. Indeed a great many people do not know how to read—and have learned the art of skimming or 'dipping,' which is an injustice to an author and an injury to this tippler of literature. The result of this kind of reading is that books are treated as a pastime instead of as a serious part of education. And another result is that such readers never remember anything they read. It is true that a good memory ought to know how to forget ; but a memory which tampers thus with books ought to be ashamed of itself. One or two books well read are better for a man than an undigested library.

But there is now no excuse for not getting some of the best books ; but remember that when books were fewer men read better, therefore don't get too many. What with the cheap books produced by Everyman's Library, The World's Classics, The New Universal Library, The Home University Library, and The People's Books, no man should be uneducated in these days. But, after all, you waste pearls on

swine, and good books are thrown away on thoughtless readers.

I have admitted that in early days I aspired to be an art critic, and wrote the Royal Academy articles for the *Leeds Mercury* for four successive years. I also wrote an article on the Musée Wiertz at Brussels, and on the Exhibition of Old Masters in 1878, for some periodicals—I have forgotten which. But my more recent connection with art has been as a very small patron of men who are living and painting pictures, and not of the dead—the purchase of whose works only serves the dealers. I have no 'old masters,' not because I have any rooted objection to those faked productions of the past which are still in their teens—no, not even to the genuine works of the great Italians and Dutch and Flemings. I really would not object to be the proud possessor of a Reynolds or a Gainsborough or a Raeburn, and would no doubt point to it as a showman does—and claim as much credit for the possession of it as was due to the artist that painted it. But, in the first place, my ambition is not to own a 'National Gallery'—like the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan—or to be the mere custodian of works beyond the dreams of insurance, but to possess works of *art* which give me pleasure in looking at them often, and not merely in boasting of them and the price I paid for them, to the envious. But I have some pictures on my walls that please me, and are winter windows which let me see pleasant landscapes. They please me, and I am glad not only to have them but to look at them—and that is one of the last things the owners of pictures usually think of. I am not like the possessor of the great library of books, of which he was very proud, who was asked by a friend, 'And when are you going to begin to read them?' I look at my

pictures, and the best of a good picture is that it becomes a better friend the more you know it. There are many who buy pictures because of the vogue they have had in a gaping academy, and who sometimes entertain angels unawares. But the *real* buyer of pictures, to profit by them, must live with them as friends.

But perhaps there is no matter about which there is so much misunderstanding as about art. A good book may tell quite a poor story, and a good picture may paint a landscape which is not in itself interesting, or tell a story which in itself may be haggard enough. Now many people read books and pictures only for the story, and have not a conception of the finer story that is between the covers or in the frame—the art. The question for the critic is not so much whether there was good taste in the choice of the subject, as to determine the way the thing is rendered in *deft* words, or *deft* lines, or *deft* colours. You don't blame the actor because he has the part of the villain, and the question is how does he convey the message of villainy to you? Is it well, then, that is his art? But the art of the artist is of precisely the same kind—it is the art of expression. Only the common people don't see the art and look at the picture, and they think they are equipped as critics because they say 'they know what they like.' People who look at nature through a picture are looking at it through a stained-glass window which is the artist's mind—and it is with that that the critic has to do, and not with the landscape. But even clever people don't see art. It was Oliver Wendell Holmes, was it not? who summed up Turner in the words:

'A landscape, foreground golden dirt,  
The sunshine painted with a squirt.'

I remember a young lady, who had been married to a friend of mine, came to call with her husband, and who, upon going down the stairs—London is a place of narrow stairs and broad views—recognised a fair reproduction of Watt's picture of the man who went away sorrowful because he had great possessions, and turned to her husband and said. 'Oh, look at this take-off !'

## CHAPTER XX

### MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Mrs. Pfeiffer—Professor Campbell—Lewis Morris—*The Epic of Hades*—Learning 'by heart'—J. Russell Lowell's lecture on Coleridge—Lines that lay hold of memory—Tannahill as a song-writer—William Miller—'Wonderfu' Wean'—A man of taste who tried to write poetry—Minor poets—Natural Selection—Dr. John Cleland's *Scala Naturæ*, and his criticism of Darwin—Terminal forms—Weismann's modification of the Darwinian hypothesis—Instinct in insects—The sphex—The Yucca moth—Bergson's explanation of instinct—My own theory of the Fall—Darwinian and Bergsonian explanation of instinct criticised—The production of new organs not accounted for—Confession of Darwin and Wallace—Huxley's suggestion of 'jumps' instead of gradual accumulations—The electric fishes, gymnotus or torpedo—How fire was brought down from heaven—Burns Dinner to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of his birth—Took the chair at the Burns Club, Dumfries—Also at Sheffield—The cautious attitude of the Bradford Burns Club—A double rejection—Bacon was the last English judge to be bribed, and his father the first reported joker on the bench—Mr. Duke on Gray's Inn—Story about Lord Brampton—Bacon-Shakespeare fad—Sir Durning-Lawrence—Principal Caird on Bacon—Mr. A. J. Balfour on Mr. Duke's estimate—Dr. Maudsley on Browning's *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*—Dr. Charlton Bastian and spontaneous generation—Re-reading *Jane Eyre*—Men of repute troubled by the aspiring writers either with manuscripts or books—My own errors in that direction—Mr. Disraeli—'Hamilton Marshall'—*The Cottagers of Glenburnie*—Lord Hatherley and a book of mine—James Thomson and Francis Thompson—The right to tell old stories—Compare some old and new.

IN 1877 I reviewed John Forster's *Life of Walter Savage Landor* for the *Times*, and received a letter

from Mrs. Emily Pfeiffer which approved my estimate of that volcanic poet and great literary genius, and said some kind but perhaps undeserved words of the writer of the article. In this way I made the acquaintance of a most devoted married couple. Mrs. Pfeiffer was a woman who wrote some admirable sonnets and much verse besides. I had several interesting letters from her, but the only one that now remains to me is dated May 20—I do not know what year :

MAYFIELD, WEST HILL,  
PUTNEY, S.W.

DEAR MR. BROWNE,—Your letter has been read by us both with rare pleasure : it is unusual in these days to have one's work judged from so high a standpoint, manners seeming to carry it so completely over matter with all the critics—or those who dignify themselves by the name. I send you a card for the Saturdays on which we remain in town and enjoy ourselves, receiving the visits of our friends in the garden among our roses, when the weather permits ; but I write specially to beg you to give me the pleasure of your company at dinner on the 6th of June at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 7.

Mr. and Mrs. Campbell from St. Andrews (you may know him as the refined and sympathetic translator of *Sophocles*) will be staying with us, and we are inviting some congenial spirits to meet them ; to hear that you will make one of this gathering will gladden us both.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

EMILY PFEIFFER.

I forget that particular dinner-party, if I was at it, but I remember dining with them once when Lewis Morris, the author of the *Epic of Hades*, was also at their table. He was a biggish, fleshy man (very unlike Professor Campbell, who was little and dapper and neat—even in his translations of *Sophocles* and *Æschylus*), whose conversation was costive, and when it did come was not remarkable. The *Epic of Hades* and his other poems were much read—and,

I suppose, admired in their day (I have seen a twenty-fifth edition of the *Epic*)—but I question very much whether the poems have much present-day vogue.

Mrs. Pfeiffer published many books, most of which she was good enough to send me, and she not only met her friends ‘among roses,’ but she painted roses and lilacs and other flowers with ability, and for many years these careful studies in water colours were exhibited in the Royal Academy.

They, the Pfeiffers, were so devoted to each other on earth—his admiration for her was so pronounced—it was but natural that they were not long parted by death. Both are long since dead, but by their deaths I lost two kind friends.

Memory is a wayward faculty. Sometimes it keeps on bringing into its audience-chamber some thought that you had hoped was buried in the grave of oblivion. At other times, when you are relying on it for the recall of something only the ghost of which is there, you find it a sieve. Of course every man’s memory depends on the man himself. A sour man will have a ‘wersh’ (as the Scotch say) memory. A kindly man will have a genial memory. A selfish man will have a memory that only remembers its master like a dog, and some memories can obey St. Paul and ‘remember the poor.’ It was the way in the old days to cultivate literary memories by making children learn much poetry ‘off by heart.’ And it is obvious that poetry with rhyme is more easily remembered than prose by reason of the mnemonics both of the rhythm and the suggestive recurrence of the expected sound. A memory so stored is an excellent possession. But without intentionally committing to memory there is much

in books that, as of right, takes possession of remembrance and is there, as it were, for ever.

J. Russell Lowell in his lecture on Coleridge, which he delivered in the Chapter-house in Westminster Abbey in Dean Bradley's time, said: 'I cannot think that it is a personal peculiarity but a matter of universal experience that more bits of Coleridge have embedded themselves in my memory than of any other poet who delighted my youth, unless I should except the sonnets of Shakespeare. This argues perfection of expression.' And he gives the following illustration :

'The sun's rim dips, the stars rush out,  
At one stride comes the dark;  
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea  
Off shot the spectre bark.'

But if it is perfection of expression which gives the verse a hook which holds memory, he might have found many other burr verses in the same poem. One that always held me like barbed wire was :

'To Mary Queen the praise be given,  
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven  
That slid into my soul.'

Still this 'perfectness of expression' is just the mark of the real poetic faculty, and it occurs not only in a talkative philosopher like Coleridge, but is, strange to say, in as great perfection in the ploughman Burns :

'Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,  
And then she made the lassies, O';  
  
'The rank is but the guinea-stamp;  
The man 's the gowd, for a' that';

or

'Twa lauchin' een o' bonnie blue.'

It would be hard to beat these for perfectness of expression, and these, when once they have got into

the head, take up a permanent residence in the memory. But is not good poetry just felicity of speech? Sometimes speech is happy in prose, and sometimes it is not happy until it goes into the upper storey of poetry, and it does that under stress of emotion, as when David said :

‘Would God I had died for thee,  
O Absalom, my son, my son! ’

I think of all the Scottish song-writers of the beginning of the nineteenth century, the son of a silk-gauze weaver of Paisley, himself a cotton weaver—Tannahill—was my favourite.

He played the fife at Greenock parades, but he played defter on Pan’s pipes than on the flute. But his excellent songs found their way to the appropriate music and were sung in many places in Scotland in my youth, and may still, for all I know. I know they deserve it. Many of them were by the ignorant thought to come even from a lustier singer, Burns himself. Many of them can now raise lively echoes in my memory. ‘Gloomy Winter’s noo awa,’ ‘Loudon’s Bonnie Woods and Braes,’ ‘Jessie the Flower o’ Dunblane,’ ‘Yon Burnside,’ ‘The Braes o’ Gleniffer,’ ‘O! are ye sleeping, Maggie?’ and ‘The Braes of Balquhidder,’ are all in their way excellent, but are—or ought to be—too well known to be quoted. But could anything be better than :

‘Towering o’er the Newton woods,  
Laverocks fan the snaw-white clouds ;  
Siller saughs wi’ downy buds  
Adorn the banks sae briary, O.’

Or the next verse :

‘Round the sylvan fairy nooks  
Feathery breckans fringe the rocks,  
Neath the brae the burnie jouks.’

Or take the shivering lover at his mistress's window :

‘Fearfu’ soughs the bourtree bank,  
The rifted wood roars wild an’ dreary,  
Loud the iron gate does clank,  
The cry o’ howlets mak’s me eerie.’

Of course there are faults—pedanticisms—in some of them. One hates a line like :

‘And left the red clouds to *preside* o’er the scene.’

It reminds one of a chairman at a county council meeting.

But leaving Tannahill, who is too well remembered to be quoted, let me refer to two verses from William Miller, the author of the ‘Wonderfu’ Wean,’ ‘Willie Winkie,’ and ‘Gree, Bairnies, Gree,’ which are as good as verses need be :

‘Oh, hairst-time’s like a lipping cup  
That’s gi’en wi’ furthy glee,  
The fields are fu’ o’ yellow corn,  
Red apples bend the tree.  
The genty air, sae ladylike,  
Has on a scented goon,  
And wi’ an airy string she leads  
The thistledown balloon.’

And :

‘The moon has rowed me in a cloud,  
Stravaiging win’s begin  
To shuddle and daud the window-brods  
Like loons that wad be in.  
Gae whustle a tune in the lum-heid  
Or craik in the sauchen-tree,  
We’re thankfu’ for a cozy hame,  
Sae gree, my bairnies, gree.’

Now with such examples as these Scottish songs, can you imagine a man of some culture, who bought a Kilmarnock edition of Burns for £500 and gave it to a free library, writing poems himself in which such verses as the following find a prominent place by their hideousness. The author was a man of some taste, a member of the Scotch Bar, and on one occasion

contested a Scotch county with a view to entering Parliament. He was an excellent man, with a head which seemed to have mercury in it, for it lolled on his shoulders, but he produced two volumes of verse. He was an intimate friend of mine, and *therefore* I will quote very few of his verses. Thus in one place he says :

‘Pillar and statue and bust  
May change with a change of the skies,  
Yet from their time-honoured dust  
Heroes from heroes arise.’

I don’t laugh, I only wonder. If obscurity is poetry, he has hit the nail on the head—to use as obscure a simile.

In another place he remarks :

‘The north wind crowds the alpine clouds,  
Then sets them sailing free  
In order grand, like ships astrand,  
On heaven’s shoreless sea.’

‘Arbitrariness’ has been praised as an attribute of a commanding poet, and Shelley’s

‘Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of eternity,’

has been quoted as an illustration of this commanding quality. But surely here we have arbitrariness with a vengeance. ‘Astrand’ on a sea without a shore is a difficulty.

‘Angels o’er us  
Singing chorus  
To the music of the stream,’

where, I take it, the River Nith sings the solos.

In another place, speaking of Tintern Abbey, he says :

‘Hereditary crows at random pass  
Thro’ loopholed windows, hovering up and down  
Where once shone crosiered saint and storied glass,  
Broken in pieces by some Roundhead clown  
To show his detestation of the Mass.’

But enough, the man was excellent ! The poems are as harmless as pap, and I have no doubt gave him pleasure in the somewhat slipshod writing of them.

But in comparing the great with these more modern imitations, is it not safe to come to the conclusion that experience is a thing from which men do not learn ?

An American once told me that he said to a friend, 'It must be a fine thing to be a poet,' and the friend said, 'Sir, it ought not only to be fine but imprisonment.'

John Cleland, M.D., LL.D., F.R.S., was for many years the Professor of Anatomy in the University of Glasgow. He married a cousin of mine, the daughter of Professor John Hutton Balfour, and the sister of Professor Isaac Bailey Balfour, who in succession occupied the chair of Botany in the University of Edinburgh. Of his distinction as an anatomist or as a teacher of anatomy I am, of course, unable to speak. His retirement was marked not only by the perhaps usual presentation, but also by the deep regret with which his going was associated, which was itself a measure of the admiration he had earned in his distinguished career. It was in other ways than as an anatomist that I knew him. As a man he was admirable. In old age he has a front like Jove, a brow heavy with thought, strong handsome features, white hair which has not lost something of the curl of youth, a fine eye and remarkable intelligence. He was not only an anatomist, but a shrewd critic of the great theory of his time, Darwinism ; a thoughtful

poet, and in his leisure made painstaking sketches, some of which were reproduced to accompany Christmas greetings to his friends. His *Scala Naturæ and Other Poems* is a problem. It is full of high and deep thought earnestly uttered. But is it poetry? In one of his papers, 'The Seat of Consciousness,' he has shown, contrary to those physiologists who account for many motions in animals, after the removal of the hemispheres, by reflex action, that these are due, even in the case of animals that have been decapitated, to consciousness, and that consciousness 'may extend along the nerves.' So poetry is not to be confined to the great brains of the race, but extends along the nerves, so to speak, and is to be found in men who are not endowed with the musical gifts of a Shakespeare or a Milton. And, as a fact, there is real poetry in these thought-crowded pages which will touch the mind's ear. I think his purely artistic gifts are the smallest parts of him.

While finding, as all must, a great truth in the theory of Evolution as expounded by Darwin, he shrewdly criticised some of the conclusions in his paper, 'The Terminal Forms of Life,' in the *Journal of Anatomy and Physiology*, vol. xviii. He made it clear that the accepted theory requires revision, and that the theory of Evolution as understood fails in various directions to explain the facts. One of his illustrations was the lamp-shells. It is certain that, instead of evolving, many animals although allowed thousands of centuries are to-day just what they were in the days of the formation of the old red-sandstone strata. He showed, too, that cockles, oysters, mussels, and scallops are another set of cul-de-sac animals, and have flourished just as

they do now from palæozoic times. He throws doubt on the idea that reptiles, birds, and mammals form an ascending series, and finds various 'terminal forms' in nature. The horse, according to him, is an illustration. Walking on its finger, as it did, it is a terminus among mammals, and upon anatomical grounds he believes that development of the vertebrate form has reached its limit and completion in man.

But not only has he suggested corrections in the current edition of Darwinian views—there are other directions in which these are open to serious doubt. Not only has Weismann questioned the hypothesis that acquired qualities are transmitted by heredity, and has substituted the theory of the continuity of the germ-plasm, but other criticisms are still waiting for answer. For instance, the care of offspring with all its curious incidents cannot be explained by any theory of Natural Selection. That an insect like the sphex should hollow out at the end of a long passage three or more chambers and deposit eggs in each; that she should then capture a supply of insects to serve as food for the larvæ which are to come in some six weeks from the eggs; and that she should foresee that the larvæ must have fresh meat and not putrid matter at the end of the six weeks is extraordinary. But that the mother insect should sting the crickets, spiders, beetles, or caterpillars in such a way as to produce paralysis and not death, and should plant a sting in the exact ganglion in which most of the nervous matter is, and that when all this is done by the future-looking and calculating sphex, she should go away and leave the eggs to the chance of this foreseeing care, must upon any theory of production by Natural Selection be absurd. This is only an illus-

tration of the prophetic care of insects for young which they will never see or know anything of. The Yucca moth is as far-seeing into a future in which apparently it has no interest, and is another instance which cannot be accounted for merely by the survival by inheritance of an accidental variation which is found advantageous to an individual of a species in the struggle for existence.

The story of the Yucca moth is really interesting. It lays its eggs on the ovules of the Yucca flower, and then carefully fertilises the pistil with pollen, the result being that the seeds form the food of the larvæ. But the eggs of the moth are laid on a smaller number of ovules than are fertilised by the moth, so that wise provision is made that all the seeds shall not be eaten by the larvæ, but that certain seeds shall be preserved so as to secure Yucca plants in the future for future moths. Now in this case of the plant the moth acts as if it was aware that the larvæ would require the ripe seeds of the Yucca, as if it knew that these could only be obtained by fertilisation, and as if it was anxious to continue the existence of that kind of plant for the benefit of a lepidopterous posterity—and consequently preserves a certain number of the seeds from being eaten by the greedy larvæ. It seems impossible for us to account for this wise prescience of the moth by a mere survival of chance variations, and the Darwinian explanation of these complicated instincts in the sphex and the Yucca moth is that actions which are performed by instinct were originally produced by intelligence. Now here Bergson comes to Darwin's assistance and seems to think that all this apparent knowledge which is in instinct once was knowledge and became, by long-continued habit, automatic and

unconscious. Indeed he makes out that instinct and intelligence were in their origin and nature identically the same, differing only in the consciousness or unconsciousness of the activity.

At the risk of being tedious let me describe a theory that I adumbrated before I read Bergson, but which is curiously confirmed by his conclusions. At the time this was not intended for a joke. I pointed out that Adam and Eve when created were purely instinctive animals, and not reasoning animals. They did right because they did not know wrong. It was only when they ate of the forbidden fruit and became as gods, knowing good and evil, that they became capable of doing wrong—which is the privilege of rationality, and implies a choice. They were—after the Fall—in the intellectual as distinguished from the instinctive phase of life. Now if that was the explanation of the Fall, the way to recover the lost Eden and innocence is to recover instinct by the formation of habits which are formed by the accumulation of similar actions—actions which are in the first instance performed by the intelligence and reason of man, but which in time become habits and are performed by instinct. Thus a child learning to play the piano has to think where to put uncertain fingers on every note, but the accomplished musician can go on playing most elaborate pieces of music while employing his reasoning faculties in carrying on a conversation with a bystander. But so it is with regard to good actions and bad. These become habitual, so that the really good man cannot do wrong and the bad man cannot do right. It was, according to my theory, in this way that the human race was to find its way back to Eden by the passing from the probationary stage of rational life into a state of

instinctive existence—which, so far as the reasoning faculties were concerned, would be the Nirvana of Buddha.<sup>1</sup> Now it is obvious that my theory is really founded on the Darwinian science that the instincts of animals have been formed by conscious actions which have by habit become unconscious instinctive acts, and on Bergson's philosophy which declares that instinct is intelligence which has become automatic, and that intelligence is always tending to become instinct.

But, after all, isn't that a rather lame way out of the difficulty of accounting for the wise acts of the sphex and the Yucca moth? It is impossible, as I understand these gentlemen, to account for these exceedingly prudent doings of the insects on the supposition that they have intelligence *now*; but you account for these miraculous instincts by saying they had intelligence *then*, and that the conscious and intelligent acts of the sphex and the Yucca moth of antiquity have accounted for the instincts of to-day. But you have only shifted the problem back one hundred and fifty thousand years—you have not solved it. I think it was Professor Tyndall, in his address to the British Association, who wanted to account for the origin of life by suggesting that a germ might have been carried from some other planet to the earth on a falling star. But merely transferring the difficulty to another place in the universe is not a solution. And we are no nearer to an explanation of what seems intelligence or awareness in the insects by saying it was once intelligence and has now become automatic, for we have still to account

<sup>1</sup> If there is any substance in this suggestion, then there would obviously be some sound advice in Solomon's Proverbs: 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard: consider her ways, and be wise.'

for the intelligence which went to the formation of the habits.

But there is another huge difficulty in the way of accepting the theory that all animals now living descended from an amoeba-like creature, and that the evolution has been produced by small, probably accidental variations from the parent model which were found to be advantageous, and therefore were part of the equipment for survival. How can that theory explain the production of new important organs like the electric battery in the *gymnotus* or *torpedo* fish? If the variations are small, it must have taken a very long time and innumerable generations to produce a real electric battery which would be of use to the fish; and during all these centuries the battery in the process of formation would not be a part of the equipment for survival, but a serious disability which would lead to the death of the fish that was building up this war material, and so to a collapse of the progress in that direction. Indeed this difficulty seems to have been appreciated, but not met, by Darwin and by Wallace, for it is admitted that it is almost impossible to conceive how the first rudiments of important organs can have been of any use; or how, if they were not of any use, they can have been preserved to further development by Natural Selection. It seems, too, to have been seen by Huxley, who, to help the lame theory over the stile, suggested 'jumps' in evolution, but this black-magic theory does not seem to have been accepted by, although suggested to, Darwin—and possibly rightly, for the theory of 'jumps' would imply either a providence or the development of a formative power at the leap which, as I say, would amount to a miracle. But if it is true that Natural Selection accounts for the

development of amoeba into man, it must account for the origin of all the organs which we find in the human structure, and that the Darwinians are unable to assert. It is an odd thing, too, that there is no trace in the animals of to-day of the construction, during periods of uselessness, of organs—like the battery—which are to be of use in time unless the poor appendix at the end of the human cæcum is really the useless beginning of something that may be of immense use in a long, long run. But if that is the case, our surgeons should be placed under an interdict !

No one denies nowadays that Natural Selection has been a powerful agent in the modification of animals and in their adaptation for their environment, but these things seem beyond its explanations—*first*, the origin of life in the primeval creatures ; *second*, accounting for the new departures which have taken place as if in imitation of the original creation ; *third*, the dead ends at which progress in evolution has arrived in various directions ; and *fourth*, the dream-intelligence which we find in everything with life and to which we have given the name of instinct.

Professor Sir J. J. Thomson, in a lecture at the Royal Institution in the spring of 1913, told his audience that of course the getting of fire by the rubbing of dry sticks together was known to many uncivilised peoples, but that two savage races had independently discovered that by means of the compression of air you could produce heat and fire. He hazarded the suggestion that these peoples might have discovered it by accident from the use of the blowpipe. If the blowpipe with which darts were

shot (so there is some ground for the suggestion as to killing Kruger by the mouth) had got stuffed up, possibly the compression of the air might have set the obstacle on fire. He did not seem to remember that Prometheus brought fire from heaven in a reed ; and this is how Robert Bridges, in the *Fire Giver*, speaks of it :

*Chorus.* 'Twas in the marsh reed.

See, to his mouth he sets its hollow flute,  
And breathes therein with heed  
As one who from a pipe with breathings mute  
Will music's voice evoke—  
See, the curl of a cloud.

*M.* The smoke, the smoke !

*Semi-chorus.* Thin clouds mounting higher.

*M.* 'Tis smoke, the smoke of fire.

This is an easy explanation of the supposed theft of Prometheus.

I was born within about a mile of the place where Burns's ashes lie after his tragic tussle with a pitiless and cold-shouldering world, and it was natural enough that I should be a worshipper of one who had crowned the noble edifice of Scottish Song with his own inimitable pinnacles, like 'Go, bring to me a pint o' wine,' 'Green grow the rashes, O,' 'Ye banks and braes,' and the 'Jolly Beggars.'

I had at first a shilling copy of Burns, as indeed I had at first only a shilling copy of *Paradise Lost*, but I read them well—and so far as Burns went, he made my head sing. I had, of course, read with real admiration the splendid essay of Carlyle on Burns, and yield to none in my admiration of him, always keeping on this side of idolatry, for there were spots on my Sun.

In 1859 my father had been chairman at the

dinner in Dumfries which was given, or at any rate eaten, to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the poet's birth. At that dinner two of the sons of Burns—old, white-haired colonels—were present, and everywhere on that grand day Scotland held up a proud head, and claimed the Burns she had hunted to the grave, as her son. In my time I had to take the chair on a 25th of January, at the Burns Club dinner in Dumfries, and propose the Immortal Memory, and to try to persuade the rest of his admirers that I was saying something new, while as a fact I was only a parrot of what had been said about Burns and his poetry probably five hundred times before. It is true that on that occasion I had not only Burns but the scurribilities of Mr. Crossland's *Unspeakable Scot* as a theme, and I could call the latter, the author of a catch-penny book, names which pleased the Scotsmen, who felt that he had been treading on the tails of their coat.

But not content with that exposition of Burns, I had again at a later date to take the chair in Sheffield, where I met many Scots abroad—who were in the steel metropolis making their fortunes I have no doubt, but keeping their memories of their native land fresh and green, watered by tears, as if in a conservatory attached to their English homes. Here was a difficulty. I must try to say something about Burns and yet not repeat what I had said of him in Dumfries. I do not know whether I succeeded, but I found the enthusiasm for Burns, amongst these his countrymen in the distant Sheffield, was so great, and the warmth of applause so genial, that it would have floated even a crankier vessel than I launched upon the kind audience.

I was saved from another dilemma. I had been asked to take the chair at the Burns Club in Bradford, and I think I was prepared to criticise Henley's criticism and to point out some errors in Henley and Henderson's edition of *Burns*. But in 1908, I think it was, I was chosen as the prospective Unionist candidate for East Bradford, and I had begun the campaign which ended in my rejection by the 'mostly fools' in the constituency, in 1910, and the re-election of Sir William Priestley. The story of that contest—so far as it need be told at all—belongs to another section of this work, but the action of the Burns Club of Bradford must be mentioned here. These admirers of Burns, who must have held with him that 'Liberty's a glorious feast,' and that even if you are a Unionist candidate for a constituency, 'A man's a man for a' that,' thought that the fact of my political venture disqualifed me as chairman at a Burns Club dinner, and so I was relieved from the dilemma of having again to make a speech proposing the Immortal Memory. I dare say some of those cautious Yorkshire Scotsmen thought that I was going to try to make political capital, and win some votes from the Chair at their festive meeting. So you see I was not only rejected by the large and important constituency of East Bradford but by the Burns Club.

Bacon, according to Lord Macaulay, was among the last Englishmen who sold justice, and his father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, was, according to Mr. Duke in his admirable lecture on 'Gray's Inn,' the first English judge of whom a judicial jest is recorded. It is recorded by Francis Bacon himself that his father, Sir Nicholas, who is said to have been a great

judge, was going the Northern circuit, and was sentencing some fellows. One prisoner named Hog had been convicted, and was called upon to show cause why sentence should not be passed on him. The prisoner pleaded as a plea that he was akin to the judge. 'How is that?' asked Nicholas. 'If it please you, my lord, thy name is Bacon and mine is Hog, and in all ages hog and bacon have been so near kindred that they were not to be separated.' So said the fellow, and the reply which Lord Bacon attributes to his father is this: 'Aye, but you and I cannot be kindred except you be hanged, for hog is not bacon until it is well hanged.'

But there is a story told of Hawkins (Lord Brampton) which, although a modern instance, is worth recording in connection with that ancient mot.

It is said that Mr. Justice Hawkins, as he then was, was at some Assize breakfast or luncheon, and he was asked what he would have. Looking down the table he said :

'I 'll try some of that hung beef.'

'It is not hung beef,' his host explained, which made room for the addition. 'It will be sure to be hung if the judge *tries* it.'

And yet Lord Brampton did not include that in his *Remembrances*.

But it was not of Henry Hawkins that I meant to speak here, but of Bacon.

A Fad is a man in possession of a weak mind. Thus there are many who upon what they regard as evidence have come to the conclusion that Bacon was Shakespeare; or at any rate, as the humorists have it, that the plays were written by another man of the same name. The late Sir E. Durning-Lawrence was one of those who set out to 'gild' the lily of

Bacon's reputation by adding to it the glittering fame of the writer of the plays and sonnets. Is it too much to say that the propagation of that view made him something of a bore? <sup>1</sup> I would rather have been convinced, or have simulated conviction, than have listened to all his confident arguments. Add a little stress to this ingenious literary fad and you would have had the fixed idea of a brain which reels like a top round that one stable position. But it is not to the half-crazy monists—if I may apply such a phrase to the Baconian-Shakespearians—that we owe our real knowledge of the great Lord Keeper. It is not even to Macaulay's distorted portrait of him that we are indebted for a picture of the man. Apart from Spedding's *Life*, we have had the advantage of two excellent contributions to our knowledge of Bacon—one from Mr. Duke (now Irish Secretary, and at that time Treasurer of Gray's Inn) on the occasion of the Assembly in Gray's Inn Hall on the 17th October 1908, the three-hundredth anniversary of the day of the election of Francis Bacon as Treasurer of that Inn; and the other from Mr. A. J. Balfour, on the occasion of the unveiling of the Bacon statue at Gray's Inn on Thursday, 27th June 1912. I was present upon both these occasions, and remember both the speeches with gratitude. They were worthy of the real reputation of Bacon, and that is saying much. But even before these the late Principal Caird, of Glasgow University, in an address on Bacon said of him :

‘Bacon, the philosopher of science, the author of the *De Augmentis* and the *Novum Organum*, and Bacon, the lawyer, politician, courtier—Bacon the

<sup>1</sup> I have suffered from him at a reception for a long half-hour, and even when he caught me at a private view of a picture-gallery, he enveloped me again in his meshes, and I saw not the pictures.

high priest of nature, the herald of the new era of knowledge, inspired by a noble intellectual ardour, leading mankind back from the paths of error and pointing out the way to the kingdom of light and truth—and Bacon, the subtle courtier, the ambitious, eager place-hunter, stooping to be jostled among the herd of time-servers and political lackeys in the courts of Elizabeth and James I., seem to me not one man but two.'

And Mr. Balfour, after quoting a passage from Bacon, approaches the same view, for he says: 'There surely speaks the seer. There you have expressed in burning words the vehement faith which makes Bacon the passionate philosopher so singular a contrast to Bacon the cold and somewhat poor-spirited politician.'

Indeed in some aspects Bacon was the Jekyll and Hyde of antiquity. The ascription to him of the foundation of inductive philosophy is of course a mistake, for the method of that philosophy had already performed wonders in the hands of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Gilbert, and it did nothing for Bacon, whose new organon of science was an absolutely impossible suggestion, and by his puzzling method no scientific discovery, either little or great, was ever made or could be made.

We may leave Macaulay's inaccurate black-and-white sketch of Bacon on one side and accept what Sir John Herschel said of him and his relation to science: 'It is not the introduction of inductive reasoning as a new and hitherto untried process that characterised the Baconian philosophy; but his keen perception and broad spirit, stirring almost enthusiastic announcement of its paramount importance as the Alpha and Omega of science.'

One curious feature about his scientific exploits is that by his method he would have superseded inventive genius in science. Now we know that imagination in science is an indispensable equipment, and to put a mechanical expedient—as a method of discovery of the truths of nature—in place of inventive genius, and to have that suggestion from a man who was himself compacted of imagination, is a somewhat strange thing in the history of literature.

But here we come in touch with the least of his works, which is also the greatest—his *Essays*. Bacon had a cool, self-contained nature, and made no confidant except his pen. To that he confided a good many littlenesses—hints for conversation at table and the like, but he never confided anything better to it than his *Essays*, the miscellaneous wisdom of a man who has been in the world. Now any one who knows his *Essays* well—and ‘it is,’ according to Mr. Duke, ‘as though he had walked in company with Sindbad or Aladdin, and had found his pocket filled with gems’—any one who thus knows Bacon at his best, knows that Bacon at his best and Shakespeare at his best were two men and not one. All the evidence which the pernicious ‘Baconians,’ like the late Sir E. Durning-Lawrence, can collect cannot shake the faith of a man who knows the writings of the two.

Henry Maudsley, M.D.—who would be described I dare say in *Who's Who* as physician and author, for he wrote a good many books—was at one time editor of the *Journal of Mental Science*. He was a man of some pointed intelligence and wrote a fairly luminous style, although in nature I think he was a little hard. He was an alienist physician of some

repute. In April 1874 Browning published his *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, and I offered to review it, from a psychological point of view, for Dr. Maudsley's journal. The article is not worth mentioning. Although Browning pronounced his hero, Léonce Miranda, sane, I, from the internal evidence of the poem, tried to prove him mad. But Maudsley's letter is worth referring to, for it shows how a fairly shrewd man in 1874 could criticise Robert Browning very ineptly. He wrote :

I have turned over the next No. chiefly to Clouston, but I dare say we shall have room. It would be in your name of course. As for me, I think Browning to be something of a psychologist, at any rate in his earlier poems, but the most ridiculous absurdity as a poet that a foolish age has ever been bamboozled with ! He simply dislocates sentences and calls the result poetry. Put in plain language what he says, and it is the most prosy tediousness imaginable. I could not read *Cotton Night-Cap* although I tried ! !—Yours very truly,

H. MAUDSLEY.

It was of the author of the *Ring and the Book* that he was writing !

I knew Charlton Bastian for a great number of years. At first, in the seventies, well, and latterly in a more fluctuating sort of way—a kind of pass-the-time-of-day friendship at the Athenæum Club. He was, in my opinion, a well-disposed man, of dark complexion, of middle height and middle capacity. He thought by his juggling with chopped hay and other experiments that he had proved spontaneous generation among the lower organisms. He, like Haeckel, was obsessed with the idea that 'if we do not accept the hypothesis of Spontaneous Generation, then at this point of the history of development we must have recourse to the miracle of a super-

natural creation. The Creator must have created the first organism, or a few first organisms from which all others are derived, and as such He must have created the first monera or primeval cytoids and given them the capability of developing further in a mechanical way.' But that idea, which even when stated in Haeckel's own words does not seem ridiculous, went against the grain with Haeckel and Bastian, and they were firm believers in getting life out of dead matter. Haeckel seemed to think that the heat and moisture of long ago had created living matter, but Bastian thought he could do the same thing with his flasks and infusions. Both of them were seeking the living among the dead.

Bastian was at one time Professor of Pathological Anatomy at University College, and practised his profession for many years. The practice, however, seemed to fall off, and he got a small pension from the Civil List, which was well deserved but not long enjoyed, for he died in a year or two. And Science still believes with Harvey, *omne vivum ex ovo*, and with Virchow, *omnis cellula e cellula*.

I have re-read *Jane Eyre*. It is a powerful, almost a masterful book, but it is old-fashioned and in many ways quaint. The Lowood school is well drawn, and the episodical death of Helen Burns has tears in it, although Charlotte Brontë makes too much of her slatternliness. A good deal of the character sketching is done with strong firm lines. Here in chapter ix. is a fairly good landscape: 'That beck itself was then a torrent turbid and ruthless. It tore asunder the wood and sent a raving sound through the air, often thickened with wild rain or whistling sleet, and for the forest on its banks that showed only ranks of

skeletons.' Here, too, is something good in chapter xii: 'Far and wide on each side there were only fields where no cattle now browsed, and the little brown birds, which stirred occasionally in the hedge, looked like rough russet leaves that had forgotten to drop.' 'The murmurs of life' is good as to the distant town. 'A blue sea absolved from taint of cloud' is quaint and a little forced. 'Approach the table,' Mr. Rochester says when he wants it put near to him. A young lady is 'disposed to be gregarious.' Another person is 'in the frequent habit.' Chapter xvi., 'A marriage was achieved.' These are quaintnesses. But there are many excellences in the stirring pages. The 'rustling state' of Mrs. Fairfax; another person 'need not cover her smiles'; 'keen condiments,' 'fostering sunbeams,' 'glorious gaze,' and many other minted phrases are there to show the writer's deft use of happy words. But throughout there is pith and passion in the book.

One of the disadvantages in the old days of making anything like a name in literature was that you were pestered by all scribblers to read their crude performances, and to stand and deliver a candid opinion of the Tragedy, the Epic, or the Novel that they sent you in 'almost undecipherable' manuscript. I have admitted that upon two occasions I sinned against men who had acquired a certain amount of reputation, and the two that I did approach for an opinion upon certain very early poems showed that they merited greatness by, at any rate, their kindness and courtesy. But I also admit that when some of my writings were in print I sent them to some men who perhaps had merited something better at my

hands, and I have even now to be grateful for some praise which it was probably their kindness that dictated rather than my merits deserved. In another place I have told how I sent a novel to Carlyle, how I dedicated another with his permission to him, and what he said of it and to me.

It must have been one of these—the first, I think—that I sent to Mr. Disraeli, for I have a letter from him. It is written by himself and dated :

GROSVENOR GATE, August 25, '71.

Mr. Disraeli thanks Mr. Browne for his book, which he will take with him to Hughenden.

Lady Beaconsfield had become partially acquainted with it in the pages of a periodical work, and spoke highly of it more than once to Mr. Disraeli.

It is true the book—a novel—had, before publication in two-volume form, been published in the *St. James's Magazine*, at that time edited by Mrs. Riddell, the author of *A Life's Assize*, and I was a little proud of this note from Mr. Disraeli.

Of course one is familiar with the usual acknowledgments of such a gift—as in the case of a certain gentleman who was dunned for subscriptions to charities, and who had recourse to the common form on the first page of a sheet of notepaper :

I —— have to acknowledge the receipt of the application from the Society for the Prevention of (or for the Promotion of) —— and beg to subscribe—

That was as far as he got on the first page, and when the secretary with eager fingers turned over to ascertain the limit of his generosity, he found only

myself, Yours truly,

A. B.

In the same way we know that the recipient of a book is quite justified in acknowledging the receipt

of it, and in assuring the author (ambiguously) that 'he will lose no time in reading it.' But Mr. Disraeli's note went one better than that. It is always better, if you are to acknowledge the receipt of a book, to do so before you have looked into it, for in that case you may indulge in a more or less veracious 'hope'; but if you have read it, you may have to give the more or less harsh opinion which follows from 'looking a gift-horse in the mouth.'

By the way, that novel was published under the pen-name of Hamilton Marshall, and in some paper a paragraph appeared: 'Mr. Hamilton Marshall is a direct descendant of Miss Hamilton, whose *Cottagers of Glenburnie* delighted our ancestors.' This was, of course, quite untrue. Miss Hamilton had been known to my grandmother, who as a girl going to her first party had been seen and admonished by Miss Hamilton for not holding up her head. Nay, further; the author of *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* had put a pin somewhere in the neck of the child's dress to make her carry an upright head, and my grandmother—seventy or eighty when she indulged in the reminiscence—had almost tears in her old eyes when she remembered that the perky pin had drawn a drop of blood from her forgetfully drooping chin which stained her white dress. That, so far as I know, was my only connection with Miss Hamilton, and how the paragraph I have quoted came to be in any newspaper, I do not know. However, the mistake was soon corrected, for a gentleman wrote from Dublin :

'I beg to remind the reading public that the authoress of *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*, Miss Elizabeth Hamilton, was born at Belfast, 25th July 1758, and died at Harrogate, 23rd July 1816, without having changed her maiden name.'

I do not know who slandered the no doubt estimable dead lady.

Lord Hatherley, the Lord Chancellor, of whom it was said he had all the virtues unredeemed by a single vice, was very kind to me in the days when I lived in the Temple. I dined with him in 31 Great George Street several times, and was asked to 'At Homes' by Lady Hatherley. The house had interest for me afterwards, for when it ceased to be a private residence it became 'chambers,' and my friend, Mr. E. H. Pember, K.C., had the dining-room—as it was in the Chancellor's time—for his consulting-room, and the room behind for an eel of a man with a red head of hair—his clerk—and if I have been in consultation in that room once, I have been some hundreds of times. I suppose I must have sent the Lord Chancellor one of my law-books, for I have a letter from him dated:

31 GT. GEORGE STREET,  
January 25, 1873.

DEAR MR. BALFOUR BROWNE,—I am glad to see you have turned your attention to the discussion of Professional Topics. The subject you have chosen, though often treated of, admits yearly a fresh development, and I trust your labour will be found beneficial both to the public and yourself. No one feels the value of such Treatises more than one called upon to administer the law. I thank you very much for sending me a copy of your work, and am yours very sincerely,

HATHERLEY.

James Thomson was born in Port Glasgow in 1834 and died in 1882. Francis Thompson was born in Preston in 1859 and died in 1907. Although they bore the same surname and were both poets—and very considerable poets—no two men could be less unlike in poetry. *The City of Dreadful Night* is a poem of

unrelieved gloom. Through *The Hound of Heaven* the light shines. Francis Thompson wrote poetry commanding admiration and pointing to hope. James Thomson has our admiration, but points to despair. Of *The City of Dreadful Night*, George Meredith said it was 'a poetical offence of dark monotonousness.' *The Hound of Heaven* is the beautiful, although strained hunt, and a successful hunt for a soul. We are perhaps induced to take too dark a view of James Thomson's pessimism, for we know his *City of Dreadful Night* best, and we associate him with his black colleague in misery, Leopardi; but there are at any rate glimpses of sunshine in some of his other poems, like *Sunday up the River*, if the *City* is under a gruesome pall. The lives of neither of these men were such as to inculcate cheerfulness. James Thomson had a somewhat battered time. Francis Thompson *walked* from Lancashire to London in search of that worst of all livings, a life by the pen, and found the stone heart of the Metropolis. The great have always to be found out by the few. He found some admiring and generous friends, in return for his great gift of poetry.

But these writers are above popularity, and will live in future—as they both desired to live—only with the few. Each of them had depth and sincerity, and had something really important to say to their fellows, and said it in a form that suited the message—each, in James Thomson's words, 'felt a rapture trembling into awe.'

I protest against a criticism which is sometimes brought to bear upon the harmless senility of reminiscences, and that is that the memory recalled or the story retold is not new. First, with regard to stories,

it is certainly true that there is nothing new under the sun. But, second, if one acknowledges that one is dependent upon memory, it is absurd to expect inventions ; and, really, some of the quite old stories are vintage stories, and are much better than the new brews of to-day. But, further, every one has not heard every old story, and to some they really may be new, although they were hatched a century ago. Here is one which must be old, but is good enough to be recalled. Theodore Hook was visiting a lady who felt as strongly about temperance as the Lady Carlisle who had one thousand bottles of wine poured into the ground, and who, thinking a word in season could do no harm to her guest, gave him a pamphlet which was entitled, 'Three words to a Drunkard.' Hook looked at it and said, 'Oh, I know: "Pass the Bottle."'

While speaking of Hook one may recall another old friend. Daniel O'Connell was challenged to fight a duel by Peel, but he wrote that Peel's challenge had fallen into the hands of his wife and she insisted upon his refusing to meet him. Afterwards—it seems to have been the expiring fashion in these days—he was challenged by Disraeli because he had called that statesman a direct descendant of the impenitent thief that died on the Cross. This time, however, he had no wife to intervene in the interest of his skin. But he again declined, on the ground that his daughter had implored him not to fight. It was about these rather pusillanimous proceedings that Hook wrote :

'Some men, in their terror of slaughter,  
Improve on the Scripture command,  
And honour a wife, or a daughter,  
That their days may be long in the land.'

Then, although death is a solemn subject, Jekyll's statement of a brewer who drowned himself in one of his own vats, that 'he was found floating in his own watery bier,' is distinctly worth remembering; as is the statement of a parallel case where a coroner had hanged himself, and some one said :

‘He lived and died  
By suicide.’

There is too a story, which amused me, of an American judge who was approached in his court by two wrangling women to decide the case of the real mothership of a baby. He proposed, upon the great authority of Solomon, to cut the baby in two. But the mothers would not hear of that, and said, 'Oh, if it comes to that, you can keep the baby,' and left the court. When, some hours afterwards, the judge was found carrying the baby through some of the precincts of the court, he was heard to declare that he thought Solomon a greatly overrated judge.

That story really properly belonged to an earlier work of reminiscence, and so perhaps does the answer of a man who was charged with murder before Mr. Justice Lawrence, and who when asked, as is usual, whether he would like to be defended by counsel, said, 'No, my lord, this is too serious a matter.'

It is said that a man who had lived in Boston died and went to heaven, and that Peter thought it necessary, by way of excuse, to say, 'I hope you won't be disappointed.' When a similar calamity came to an inhabitant of Chicago and he went to his place, he, even without the splendid memories of Boston, looked round and said, 'Well, I did expect to see something better than this.' But his guide—not Peter this time—explained, 'This is not heaven.'

It was said of an illustrious American, ' His name will be remembered wherever his deeds and mortgages are known.'

Here are three new stories to compare with the old ones :

A minister of a rural parish, when driving home to the manse, overtook a girl who was a servant at a farm not far from the manse, and offered her what they call a ' lift ' in his pony phaeton. When they came to the road leading to the farm, he stopped to let her get down, and she said, ' Oh, thank you, sir.'

' Don't mention it,' said the well-disposed minister.

' I won't,' said the girl, and she went her way with her secret.

Once in an inquiry, counsel, with some impatience of a witness's verbosity, said :

' Did you ever answer " Yes " or " No " to a question in your life ? '

' Yes,' said the witness and gathered the laugh.

' Did you hear,' said a recently married man to a friend, ' what a fright I got at my wedding the other day ? '

' I was there ! I saw,' said his friend.



# POLITICAL RECOLLECTIONS

## CHAPTER XXI

### MY RIGHT TO WRITE

My connection with politics—Contested a county and a division of a large burgh—Onlookers see most of the game—While a prospective candidate, trouble with Sir Robert Reid (Earl Loreburn)—A tea-cup storm—Peace restored—Lord Loreburn's title confounded with St. Michael—Mr. Ure, Lord Advocate (Lord Strathclyde)—Sir Robert Wallace and Perth city—An American's view—Number of meetings addressed—Over their heads—Points missed—Soaking in.

By what right, I may be asked, do you write political recollections when your connection with political life was so short, sharp, and decisive? I stood for two constituencies, one a county and the other a division of a large burgh, in the Unionist interest, and was rejected by both. But the answer to the suggested question is, that my right is indubitable, for politics is held to be every man's province—otherwise I suppose we would not have manhood suffrage—and my qualification to exercise that right is that it is onlookers who see most of the game, and it is only the outsider who can be impartial. Sorrel, the French syndicalist, says, 'It is necessary to be outside to see the inside,' which sounds like a paradox but it is founded on truth. Inside any movement or doctrine you are part of it and cannot judge it, any more than you can form a just opinion of yourself. If you think about it, your own face is the one of which you really have the most inaccurate mental

impression, although you may have seen it in a mirror every day. Outside a movement you can stand, as it were, on the sidewalk and observe it. You see it in profile, and you need not, unless you like, join in the shouting.

I think I was sorry at the time not to be successful in passing into the House of Commons, but as success in either of these adventures would have made continued practice at the Parliamentary Bar impossible, I had substantial economic advantages in my failure. Even before the election, when I was merely what was called prospective Unionist candidate for Dumfriesshire, I got into hot water. I told an audience that Sir Robert Reid had said that politics was 'a dirty business,' and I went on to say that Sir Robert ought to know, for he had done two dirty tricks: he had brought down Mr. Gulland to contest the burghs, and Mr. Molteno—'carpet-baggers'—to stand for the county.

I thought no more of the matter, until some months afterwards Sir Alfred Cripps (now Lord Parmoor) said to me that something I had said had given great offence to Sir Robert Reid. I raked my memory, and the only thing I could find in the dust-heap was the almost stingless sentence I have quoted above. Now when I went into politics I thought that the politician ought to make himself a pachydermatous animal. There is no place for the thin-skinned on the political platform, and I was surprised that a man like Sir Robert Reid, who must have had many rough rubs in his time, and had no doubt knocked many people over the knuckles, should have taken offence at such a little libel. But the tea-cup storm was put an end to, as a tea-cup storm should be, by being stirred to the sugar at the bottom of

the cup—in this case, in Sir Robert Reid's disposition. I wrote and pointed out that the words had been intended for a joke, if they had missed fire, and I find that there and then the hatchet was buried. I have his letter :

ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE,  
27th July 1903.

DEAR BALFOUR BROWNE,—I received your note with much pleasure, and very heartily share your wish that our relations should be friendly. It is true I was hurt at some criticisms of yours. Perhaps I am too sensitive; in any case your note has banished from my mind the whole thing, and I beg you also will entirely forget it. We are to have our political fight in the same neighbourhood, and it may be that we shall be political neighbours in future. It will be my effort so to handle any controversies that I may not disentitle myself to your personal goodwill however we may differ in opinion. Thanking you for your letter.—I am,  
Yours sincerely,

R. T. REID.

So it was we 'kissed again with tears.'

Our relations have been cordial ever since, although when he took the title of 'Loreburn'—on being raised to the peerage as Lord Chancellor—I upbraided him, as a man of peace, for having chosen the 'battle cry' of Dumfries as a title to be known by. In the old days when border raids were common the Achilles heel of the town of Dumfries was by the 'lower burn,' and when the English approached, the cry to the rallying front was 'A loreburn!' and it is still the motto of that excellent community. But I was able not long afterwards to tell him a consolatory anecdote. The Town Council of Dumfries had made it obligatory that the boys who were attending the Academy should wear a badge on their caps, and the badge had on it not only the town's motto, 'A loreburn,' but the town's patron saint, St. Michael. A lady, meeting one of the boys she

knew, looked at the badge and said: 'I see you have St. Michael on your cap.' 'No, ma'am,' said the boy, 'it's Lord Loreburn.'

While mentioning my disagreements, I may refer to the fact that at the time I contested Dumfriesshire, Mr. Ure, now Lord Strathclyde and Lord Justice-General, was Lord Advocate, and came down and spoke for my opponent, Mr. Molteno, at Lockerbie. I replied to his speech in words which might easily have been a solvent of friendship, for we had acted as counsel together and against one another on several occasions. But let me say we were still good friends after the event, for I find that when during the contest he came down again to speak upon politics, I asked him to come and stay with me at Goldielea. I would have forgotten the fact had I not found a letter from him which shows that we were not 'at daggers drawn':

31 HERIOT ROW, EDINBURGH,  
*Tuesday.*

MY DEAR BALFOUR BROWNE,—On my return from London this morning I find your extremely kind letter of the 19th awaiting me. I am so vexed that I cannot accept your most hospitable proposal. But I am now up to the neck in Old Age Pension appeals, and cannot get off to Dumfries till a train due there at 7.40, and must return by the earliest train next morning. So that it will be a great advantage for me to stay at the Station Hotel. Many thanks to you.

I am rejoiced to hear that you dare not be present. Life would not be worth living for either you or me if we had to go to political meetings. They are a horror.—Yours very sincerely,

ALEX. URE.

Once I was discussing elections with two men who had both been in the House of Commons for many years, and had both, at the time of our conversation, got the reward for that fine public service.

One of them was a Unionist, the other was a Liberal. Each of them had gone through six contested elections, and they were comparing notes. To certain questions they admitted that not one of these elections had been quite pure or quite free from corruption, and they seemed to think that there was much virtue in their 'quite.' I could say, however, for my own contests that they were both conducted, so far as I knew, without corruption ; one without any, and the other—well, it is in such connection that silence is golden.

While I am speaking generally of election contests let me mention one. Sir Robert Wallace, Chairman of the County of London Sessions, sat in Parliament for some time as a representative of the city of Perth. Sir Robert Wallace was a Liberal, and at one of his elections his opponent, a Unionist, was supported by the better classes in the community—I mean no offence to Wallace—and had therefore a great number of conveyances at his disposal to bring voters to the poll. A drive in a nobleman's carriage has often confirmed a voter in well-doing. Wallace, notwithstanding the fact that most of his supporters had to walk to the polling-booths, was successful, and was at the head of the poll. When he was walking—exulting perhaps—down one of the streets, he was accosted by a 'stranger' who said : 'Mr. Wallace, I think ?' 'Yes,' said the candidate, now with the wings of 'M.P.' to his name. 'Wall, sir,' said the stranger, 'I am an American citizen, and I remained in Perth to see the way in which a British election is conducted.' 'Well,' said the representative, 'what do you think of it ?' 'Wall, sir, I think that all the quadrupeds were on one side and all the men on the other.'

The American citizen had been judging of ability by the number of legs and not, as a phrenologist would have done, by the height of the forehead of the voters. There is no more virtue in the man who throws sixes from the dice-box than the man who throws threes. And the ballot-box is a dice-box after all.

But speaking of elections, and of the oratory which is the feature of these gambling transactions, I am reminded of what an American citizen, who sat next me at a City dinner, said. We were both suffering from the interminable talk of the after-dinner speakers who, like Juliet in the balcony, 'speak but say nothing,' when my neighbour said, 'Sir, in my country we call capital punishment Elocution' (electrocution).

Perhaps it ill becomes me to gird at talk. In my first contest during the course of the election campaign, I addressed sixty-five meetings at various scattered places in an extensive country, 'and it was wintry weather.' And certainly in East Bradford during a whole month I must have spoken about three times each night. And one thing must have struck every one who has done such things, and that is that at such meetings speakers often mistake scurrility for wit. Indeed the former is understood by the common people, and the latter is very often over their wooden heads. But that is one of the common forms of the election agent. When a man has failed to 'go down' with a meeting, his agent assures him that he is over their heads, which is meant as a sort of reprobatory compliment. I once said what I really thought was rather neat. I forgot what it was apropos of, but I told the audience that 'flattery was the milk of

human kindness turned to butter,' and I was assured that that sort of thing wouldn't do. What the people liked was 'round abuse.' I remember once in my first contest I went in my motor, some twenty miles through wind and wet, to a meeting at a school-house at E——. There were fifteen or twenty countrymen present, and even 'round abuse' of a 'ramshackle' Government did not rouse them to the least interest in what I was saying. Indeed I might as well have addressed fifteen or twenty sacks of potatoes, but the Unionist agent assured me that 'it was a good meeting for E——,' and some one else said what I had said would 'soak in'; but my own impression is that it was something else that had 'soaked in,' and in such bad weather I dare say it did them more good.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *LAISSEZ-FAIRE*

Lord Bramwell and Mr. Shaw-Lefevre—‘Vive Laissez-faire !’—Nails in its coffin—Free Trade—Adam Smith and the laws of justice—Theft—Looking to individual benefit and not State benefit—What is good for one not necessarily good for the other—Money, no magic in—Adam Smith and retaliation—Muzzling the House of Lords—Proletariat impatience of—General strike—Referendum—Action of Executive—Plebiscitory bureaucracy—Social Reform—Old Age Pensions—National Insurance—Eight Hours Bills—Conservatism and Socialism—Lord Hugh Cecil—The Poor Law—Charity and slavery—Imperialism and reciprocal trade—Imperialism and war—Aspect of Tariff Reform—Old letter from Lord Bramwell, and letter about Municipal Trading from Lord Alverstone, Lord Chief-Justice of England.

LORD BRAMWELL, in 1884, after politely bullying Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, who had, as President of the now defunct ‘Social Science Congress,’ been praising in a weak Liberal sort of way the Socialist statutes like the Truck Acts, Licensing Acts, the Shipping Acts, the Hares and Rabbits Act, the Employers’ Liability Act, and the rest, ended his pamphlet with a kind of shout, ‘Vive Laissez-faire !’

But even then *Laissez-faire* had a dozen nails in its coffin, and now it has been dead and buried for years. It is to be remembered that Cobden and Bright, both humane men, were opposed to the Factory Acts, and that Bright, on the principle that people should be allowed to do what they choose, held that ‘adulteration was a legitimate form of competition.’ Now,

of course, 'let things alone' is an excellent motto for those who have most of the things they want and only desire to do with them what they please under police protection, but it is a very unsatisfactory doctrine to those who haven't got what they want and who desire to have a great many things that their better-off neighbours possess. The former are always for 'Hands off!' to legislation; the latter, who have now the power of votes, are always for 'Hands up!' to those who have the wealth of the country in their keeping.

But although this does not profess to be, and is not a work on politics, it may be worth while saying a word about the old *Laissez-faire*, which however only survives in our present-day statesmanship as 'Free Trade.' *Laissez-faire*, which as I say means the liberty of every man to do as he pleases, is in logical result of course nothing but anarchy, and even those who pretended to be in favour of such a curious policy always limited the liberty by saying that in every man doing what was right in his own eyes, they meant that no man was to violate the 'laws of justice'—which, of course, made it necessary to ascertain what the laws of justice were: and that *Laissez-faire* did not tell us. A man they would have admitted is not to be allowed in a country to steal from his neighbour by force or fraud, however much it would please him to do so. And it is quite evident that, from the point of view of society, theft is economically wrong, for it does nothing for the community, but only enriches the successful thief at the expense of his victim or dupe. But why stop at a thief? If a trade union succeeds by means of a strike in securing better wages with shorter hours, and in consequence the products of the labour of

that trade diminish, the members of the trade union have done in effect just what the thief did. They have transferred money from the pockets of an employer to the pockets of his employee; but it has not produced a gain but a loss to the community, seeing that it is not wages, but the products of labour, that is wealth.

Now the error of those who held by *Laissez-faire* was that they always looked at the individual and thought that the interests of the State were the sum of the interests of the individuals composing it. Now that is an obvious fallacy. Individuals have to give up liberty that a state may exist—as even Adam Smith saw when he put the laws of justice above individual licence—and the fact is that when we are discussing *Laissez-faire* we ought to remember that the question is, What policy is good for the community? And the answer to it is that letting everything alone, allowing every one to do as he pleases, would be the death of the community, and that fact has been recognised by the country again and again in every department of life except in that of international trade.

The Factory Acts were passed to prevent men doing as they choose; they prevented masters employing children under a certain age, or women for more than a certain number of hours a week. They prevented women working longer, even if they wanted to. The payment of wages in goods was, from an individualist's point of view, a legitimate contract. There is no magic in money. It is only a medium for barter. But direct barter of articles for services was prevented by the Truck Acts because it was believed to be inimical to the interests of the community. These are only two out of a dozen illustrations that might be given of the fact that this

country has acted on the principle that if every one did as he chose, his actions, however beneficial they might be to him, might be an injury to the community, and would therefore be violations of the laws of justice.

Now it is precisely on the same ground that we condemn Free Trade. In a world where there were no nations with their competitions and rivalries and wars, perhaps it might work. But in this world as it is, it is absurd to found a policy for nations upon the peddling policy of the small shopkeeper, and that is what the *Wealth of Nations* did ; although even Adam Smith saw that 'defence was better than opulence,' and wrote : 'There may be good policy in retaliations of this kind when there is a probability that they will procure the repeal of the high duties and prohibitions complained of. The recovery of a great foreign market will generally more than compensate the transitory inconvenience of paying dearer for a short time for some sort of goods.' He had opened a trap-door in his platform, and Free Trade disappears through it.

But we have travelled a long way since we attended the funeral of *Laissez-faire*.

The Democracy has had it all its own way in later years ; and as we have muzzled the ox—the House of Lords that used to tread out measures—instead of *Laissez-faire* we have had all sorts of Socialistic legislation since Lord Bramwell cried in the wilderness. The Liberals' idea of giving votes was that it was a safety-valve against revolution—that they were by this means eliminating force from the sphere of politics. But the proletariat, having tasted power, are now impatient of the slow method of red-tape legislation. They clamour, as we have seen, for the

expedition of their claims to what they want and will have, and would fain secure by means of the paralysis of a general strike which would bring Britain to her knees in a week—by the Referendum, by the direct government of the popular vote, or by the suppression of Parliament by the action of the executive. Much of the legislation which used to be made at Westminster is now manufactured in Whitehall, and to many politicians the days of Parliament seem numbered and its ruined place likely to be taken by a plebiscitary bureaucracy, in which officials would draft, and the popular vote sanction or reject, the proposed legislation. Indeed individualism has ceased to exist, and the State does more and more of what was formerly left to individual initiative and private enterprise.

It is in these days that both parties—for votes—have been embarking on what is called Social Reform, but what is in fact nothing but playing to the gallery.

So it is we find Conservatives not only acquiescing but approving of such Socialistic measures as Old Age Pensions, National Insurance, Eight Hours Bills, and measures for the protection of adult human beings who ought to be able to protect themselves. Nothing is more amusing than the ingenuity with which a staunch Conservative swallows and defends these experiments in legislation. In his very clever and, on the whole, wise book on Conservatism, Lord Hugh Cecil, while he admits that 'Conservative social reforms need not proceed on purely individualistic lines,' that 'State interference is not such an alien from Conservatism,' states that 'there is no antithesis between Conservatism and Socialism.' The Conservative party go back for their lesson in Socialism to the Poor Law (the 43 Elizabeth c. 2),

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which provided for putting the poor to work, but also desired to see that none of them shirked work. It was, no doubt, a measure of charity and slavery, for while it relieved these, by work in a workhouse, who had formerly been in receipt of doles at the gates of the convents, it also made slaves of the workers, and prevented vagrancy and 'sturdy beggars' by punishments which began with a flogging, but ended in case of contumacy with death. But it was a long step from the prevention of starvation, which would have disgraced a country which hypocritically professed to be a Christian nation, to Old Age Pensions and National Insurance, measures which made the poor richer by making the rich poorer. And it is also a long step from protecting women and children in factories to protecting adult workmen by an Eight Hours Bill.

But these are the steps which have been taken; and although Lord Hugh Cecil tries to defend even such advances, not on the ground of the payment of the State for the services of citizens—which is the Socialist's claim—but on the ground of charity to the destitute, and partly on the ground of the Christian virtue of gratitude, the ingenuity does not quite succeed. We account for this eagerness for Social Reform in the Conservative party—which came into existence to 'preserve,' and is now building a new edifice upon the ruins of what was called the constitution—by the fact that the Conservatives, like the Liberals, are fishing in the troubled waters of politics for votes. Indeed, was not the policy of Tariff Reform—which I think a wise policy, and which, I gather, Lord Hugh Cecil rather reluctantly accepts—was it not adopted as an attempt to secure the votes of the people by the bribery of the promise of higher

wages ? It is true it also looked to a closer relationship between this country and her colonies, which has somewhat curiously been brought about by the haggard Imperialism of war instead of the smiling Imperialism of reciprocal trade. But in the main Tariff Reform was a net to catch votes in, and when the time comes it will succeed because it is a measure of Protection which is in the very teeth of *Laissez-faire*, and is a more legitimate function of the State than much of the social-reform legislation which it has put upon the Statute-book. Much more of the same sort that, when peace comes again, will find its way into the pages of that history of the masterly retreat of the Conservative party from the trenches so carefully prepared, to shorten its front and to establish positions further in the rear.

But the real policy of the Conservative party lies in its Imperialism. It is not content that Great Britain should be a recluse among nations ; it desires to see it with influence in the comity of nations. It was in this aspect that Tariff Reform had a vista far greater than merely the increase of the wages of our workmen : the punishment of foreign nations who would injure us by their tariffs or by the dumping of their wares and peaceful penetration of their citizens—an Imperialism which was to be brought about to some extent by diversion of foreign trade into colonial channels.

But as I began the chapter with a mention of Lord Bramwell, let me finish it by referring to him again. In 1885 there was a long inquiry before a Royal Commission, over which Lord Bramwell presided, into the accumulations in the Thames in consequence of the discharge of sewage into the river at Barking and Crossness by the

London County Council. About the same time Sir James Crichton-Browne had been appointed to inquire into the over-pressure of children in elementary schools, and he made a report which I reviewed in the *Westminster*. I gather I must have sent a copy of my article to Lord Bramwell, for I find a letter from him in which he says :

THE ELMS, EDENBRIDGE,  
KENT, July 30, 1885.

DEAR MR. BROWNE,—You do not require recalling to my mind. I have a very pleasant recollection of you, none the less so that you remind me of the duty I had undertaken when I was losing my temper over that endless sewage affair. Thanks for the *Westminster*. I entirely agree with you. I thought Dr. Browne right in his first report, and was surprised at a fierce attack in the *Times*, and thought in his reply he quite maintained all he had said. Of course I read the things in the perfunctory way in which one reads the 'daily' newspapers, from which, however, one learns more than from anything else. But I took an interest in it. We have a little school here with a Master and Mistress, both of whom as you say get a share of the grant. Before any of this public talk about 'pressure' both Master and Mistress told me it existed in the little school, and that they would be glad to get rid of it even at some loss of income. I feel sure it is so. They are very kind to the children and give them a little run, but it cannot be so: five years old is too early to begin unless where the teacher is the father or mother, with picture books and the lesson  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour. I am glad you refer to *Laissez-faire*. Our opinions are pretty much alike. I am not sure that education might not be gratuitous. Did you read a letter in the *Times* by Auberon Herbert, in the direction of your remarks about discharging the parents from their duty? And did you read the stinging answer to it from some one who suggested that a similar argument might justify not punishing wife-beaters? It is difficult to define 'pampering,' or indeed anything else. But I think it is mischievous when it is an alms—a dole—fitful, not when it is constant and a right and does not supersede personal labour. The State affords it in some things—the police, for example. I suppose the workman does not con-

tribute to their support. Your observations at p. 17 as to the multifarious duties of Corporations are good. But get a paper published by the Liberty and Property League containing a review of Private Legislation in one session—I think 1852. I have not one or I would send it to you. I send you a paper of mine on that wretched George's 'Nationalisation.' You ought to be a member of our League. Let me propose you. Cost 5s. a minimum. How did you like the Sewage report? Do you agree?—Yours very truly,

BRAMWELL.

Lord Bramwell was really an estimable and bluff spirit, heavy in appearance, but straightforward with every blow from the shoulder when he struck, a great lawyer, and a man of robust common-sense. It was a pleasure to know such a stalwart man—a man not without the precious gift of humour in him.

Sir John Lubbock (Lord Avebury), in his book on 'State and Municipal Trading,' refers to a lecture of mine on 'Municipal Trading' delivered in 1903. I think it was printed by somebody, probably the Municipal Association, and I must have sent a copy to the Lord Chief-Justice, for I have from him the following quite characteristic letter about it:

HORNTON LODGE, KENSINGTON,  
3rd March 1903.

DEAR BALFOUR BROWNE,—Many thanks for sending me your paper on Municipal Trading, which I have read with much interest, and I agree with almost all your arguments so far as they relate to such matters as gas, water, and tramways. I doubt whether it is desirable for municipal authorities to go into electric lighting, but that is a matter of opinion. As regards the minor trades in which they would actually compete with small traders, personally I think municipal trading would be very undesirable. This is, however, my private opinion, which I do not wish quoted as I have really not sufficient data to form a conclusive opinion on the matter.—Yours faithfully, ALVERSTONE.

J. H. BALFOUR BROWNE, K.C.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### SOME 'SAYINGS'

Not much fun in election contest—Noise at political meetings—Number of speeches—Excursions of enlightenment—Dark drives—Political speeches are dead things—After delivery not worth reproduction—Some extracts which were given in the *Yorkshire Post* in 1906, and in the *Bradford Argus* in 1910.

THE idea that there is much fun to be got out of a contested election is quite unfounded. We know from experience that there is 'fun at the fair' with its shooting-galleries and merry-go-rounds, but the shooting at opponents in an electoral campaign, and the merry-go-round of politics with its State hobby-horses, is a very dull affair ; and although there is sometimes much laughter and noise at political meetings, it is due not to the humour of the occasion, but to the bubbling enthusiasms of people who have partisan proclivities, and 'laugh full well with counterfeited glee' at a joke made for them by their pet candidate, while they 'boo' at any such impertinence from a speaker on the other side.

Besides making a great many speeches in the county in 1903-4-5, some of them at Horticultural Shows, some at Sports, as I have said I made some sixty-five speeches in December 1905 and January 1906. Without a motor-car these excursions of enlightenment would have been impossible, and as most of the meetings had to be in the evening, for the benefit of the men who were supposed to be at work

all day, many a long dark drive I had as the apostle of this political enlightenment. The speeches which I made at these various outlying places in the county have been forgotten by the persons addressed, and even by myself, and it would be body-snatching to disinter these dead things from the grave of oblivion. Even if they were remarkable, I fear they would—unlike the speeches of my friend, Sir Edward Clarke, which have been printed—be unworthy of publication. Still, I would—merely as a reminiscence, and to give the reader some idea of the 'stuff' which was in the speeches—like to quote some of the things I said. Owing to the courtesy of the editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, who allowed me to look at the back numbers of his paper for these old dates in 1905-6, I have been able to quote from his columns, which were called 'Points from the Platforms,' some sentences which the *Yorkshire Post* of that time thought it worth while to quote from the speeches I delivered in Dumfriesshire. Whether they were worth quoting may be a question, and they are only reproduced here because some of them recall pleasant memories of the occasions when the speeches were delivered. They are mostly short, and give a fair notion of the planks in the dilapidated platform on which I stood.

Labour is all you have got to sell, but to make a bargain there must be a buyer. Cobden saw that when he became the apostle of Free Trade, he desired to secure markets for our goods by the magic of cheapness. But now we have our labour to sell, and our neighbour nations will not let us into their markets. They desire to employ their own people, and not our people. We, with our free imports, employ their workmen and not our own.

Do you think we hold our colonies by force? No, it is by prestige. There are three thousand whites in Singapore,

and two hundred and fifty thousand Chinese and Malays. This handful of men keep the British flag flying by reason, not by force of arms—but by reason of the great name of Britain. It is the imperial idea rules these colonies, and not brute force.

Leamington is setting an example of an election without speeches. The one side will not hear Mr. Lyttelton, the other retaliates by refusing to hear Mr. Lloyd George. It would be a good day for candidates if elections could be conducted in silence and speeches could be taken 'as read.'

This is an election fought with the devil's weapons, lies. ' But I have seen the wicked in power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo ! he was not.' This Government may spread itself, but the time will come when it will not be !

Protection ! We protect all our weak: Our children against parents who would not educate them ; our workmen against employers who paid their wages in goods ; the purchaser against the seller who foisted on him adulterated articles ; women and children in factories against employers who used to employ them for inordinate hours to save the payment of fair wages to men. We have always by law protected the weak against the strong. Now our trade is weak and the strength is with our rivals, are we not to protect and further it ?

It was Mr. Bright, I think, who said that force is no argument. The Liberals at Leamington and Derby seem to think that noise is logic.

You might beat a competitor in the same line of industry ; but do you think you can beat him and his Government, which is fighting for him too ? Well, you are bold men, but with all your foolhardiness you will be trodden under foot.

' Chinese Slavery ' is the lying cry which has turned many a foolish vote. I should have thought that the electorate had more sense than to be influenced by a political tarradiddle.

Tradesmen in Ireland have, as you know, been boycotted by the persons who used to deal with them and have had to starve in consequence. We in Britain have been boycotted by foreign nations, and if this system goes on we will have to put up the shutters.

You want cheap bread, cheap shoes, cheap clothes, cheap everything, but you may buy them too dear if the price is the starvation of the weak people, the producers of this country.

All the Socialists, from Karl Marx down, have seen that competition in the labour market reduces wages, and have advised the limitation of competition by combination. But the Liberal party of to-day desires to continue a policy which enables every foreign workman to compete with undue advantage against British labour. This is to remedy the evil of a country by bleeding it to death.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, at the Albert Hall meeting, said that that was not the time to declare his policy, and that would be done when the General Election came. Now he issues his address to the Stirling Burghs and refers electors to his speech at the Albert Hall for his policy. This is like playing at battledore and shuttlecock with two battledores, and nothing for a shuttlecock.

The golden rule of trade is 'make others do as you do to them.'

If Protection is the ruin of the country, why are the United States and Germany not in a state of dilapidation? And if our free-import system means salvation, why do the continental nations and our colonies not abandon Protection in favour of our method? We cannot persuade any nation or colony that we are right, and yet some persons try to persuade the electorate of Great Britain that the whole world is wrong.

A great statesman was in favour of a clean slate for the past. The Liberal party's programme is a clean slate for the future.

Dumping is spoiling our market by illegitimate cheapness. Tariffs spoil foreign markets for us by illegitimate dearness. You working-men are between the devil and the deep sea.

Liberal policy is to tear pages from the Statute-book, to reverse the legislation as to Licensing and Education. If this becomes the policy of successive parties in power, you will reduce legislation to an absurdity. To have one party undoing what the other has done is to set people to weave

like Penelope. I think it was a funeral pall for her father-in-law, Laertes, that Penelope wove and unweave, but it would be a funeral pall of party representative government if the weaving and unweaving of the Statute-book became the practice of Parliament.

The more orders a manufacturer has, the more cheaply he can produce; the more business he has, the higher wages he pays. Our policy, which will give you more markets, will increase the demand and the sale of productions, and in that way reduce prices and at the same time will increase wages.

It was Heine who said: 'Calumny, that vile insolent spectre, sits upon the noblest graves,' and calumny in the mouth of the present Government has been sitting and croaking on the grave of the Balfour Government with scurrilous cackling. But the spectre cannot read what is on the headstone, which is inscribed with the words, 'I will rise again,' and that resurrection will take place in the early days of the coming session after the General Election.

That is a prophecy which was not fulfilled. I wonder who it was put the 'lying spirit' in my mouth?

But I have borrowed enough from these old copies of the *Yorkshire Post*, which was kind enough to quote these and other sentences from my speeches. In the contest in East Bradford in 1910, some of what were called, perhaps a little ostentatiously, 'Sayings of the Day,' were given from day to day in the *Bradford Argus*. Many of these, I dare say, scarcely deserve the proud position they were given, and some which had personal reference to opponents do not deserve to be reproduced, for although the salt of bitterness often does preserve from neglect, I question whether it would be good taste now to emphasise them by repetition. But it is not to be supposed that either of my contests was 'vitriolic.' They were both conducted on both sides on a higher level than that

of political Billingsgate, and these few quotations, my 'Letters to an Elector' and my 'Further Letters to an Elector,' bear out the assertion.

Our enemy in this election is indifference. The Socialists are in earnest, as robbers often are. We are apathetic. There is an immense mass of sluggish opinion that determines the issue of elections. I want you to move that, and we shall have an avalanche of victory.

Do you know the cuttle-fish? It has a way of ejecting an inky substance into the water, and in the cloud eluding its pursuer. The waters of politics are black with lies which a cuttle-fish Government are ejecting into the clean waters of truth.

If you send me to Parliament I shall not be a silent tombstone set up to the memory of East Bradford. I do not aspire to achieve oblivion in the House of Commons, as some members have done.

Lord Rosebery, I said, reminded me of the quotation from Shakespeare: 'The uncertain glories of an April day.'

Sometimes I was prophetic:

Catastrophe knocks at our door. We can hear it hammering in German shipyards, and yet we have to extort an admission as to the 'two-power standard' from a reluctant and retrenching Government.

We have given the Government the keys of the castle and they have betrayed their trust. They have left us unguarded and unarmed at a critical time, that they might get votes from the ignorant and deceive people they have betrayed.

Socialism desires that each man should be paid according to his need, not according to his ability. There is a chance for idiocy after all.

The *Times*, answering Mr. Asquith's question whether any one believed that Germany's prosperity was due to tariff walls, pointed out that seventy million Germans did, and asked, 'Does he live in a balloon?' Well, he has been

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living in an aeroplane but the engine has stopped, and he will be precipitated next week from the zenith of power to the hard earth of opposition.

(These things don't always come off.)

Socialism will stop all social legislation. Much requires to be done by gradual advance. But the demands of the hare-brained will frighten the people and they will stand still, lest they should go too far, or too fast.

They ask us to disintegrate the Empire when the whole tendency of the times is integration or the formation of larger units. We have seen the formation of the German Empire. We have seen the formation of a united Italy. We have seen the resistance to disintegration in the American Civil War, and yet Home Rule statesmen ask us to form a disunited Kingdom. That is folly.

This election has reversed the position of parties : Liberals are Conservatives, conservative of a foolish tradition of 1846. Conservatives are reformers, and desire to see the fiscal system remodelled.

Bismarck said, ' The Germans fear God and nothing else on earth.' Your secular education will mean that your children are to be brought up to fear only the devil.

Free Trade looks upon the destruction of a particular trade with indifference. The workers, it says, will find employment in another trade. But what becomes of the workers' capital of skill ? What is the good of the technical knowledge of a watchmaker if you set him to plant trees ? He will fall from a skilled worker, from an independent man, to a sweated slave. Is Free Trade your friend or your enemy ?

It is not true to say that all wealth is produced by labour, if you mean the work of the muscles. ' Brains ' have produced more wealth than ' hands.' The inventor of the steam-engine and the spinning-jenny have done more for the production of wealth than all the workpeople of Bradford.

This is a Government all for foreigners. It will not tax their imports, but takes the money that is necessary to run this Empire out of your pockets. Its members are angry

with Mr. Balfour because he has pointed out the inadequacy of our preparations, and of course they are backed up in this by the German newspapers, which look upon this inadequacy as a virtue. They will have nothing to do with a trade partnership with the colonies. At one time the Liberals supported a policy of 'Perish India,' and now they seem willing to part with the colonies rather than depart from the obsolete principles of Free Trade. This is an altruistic patriotism I despise.

I find, too, that the *Argus* was good enough to preserve such truisms as :

'If you can be superior to defeat, you can master the world.'

'Vituperation is a poor substitute for argument.'

But let me quote a more cheerful note. The paper informed its readers that one of my meetings was interrupted by a brass band, and credits me with remarking :

'Never mind, gentlemen; an election never was won by a big drum.'

## CHAPTER XXIV

### LAND-TAXERS

‘This is the heir’—‘Come let us tax him’—J. S. Mill—‘Spontaneous increase of rent’—Henry George—Confiscation only of rent—What gives value to land and other property—Single-tax gentlemen—Right to property earned—Distinction between earned and unearned—Individually earned property does not exist—Exchangeable value—Existence of men gives value—Labour or services—Land attempted to be distinguished from other property—Copyright and invention—Bargain with State—Taxation and confiscation—Increased profits of lawyer not taxed—Peter and Paul, taking from rich to endow the poor—Payment for ability or skill—The merits of the acquisition of property to be inquired into—Mr. Blatchford in the *Clarion* gets behind Land-taxers—Capital in a spade—Fair wage for past labour.

‘THIS is the heir: come let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ But modern politicians who desire to have a single tax are more moderate in their language, and only say: ‘Come let us tax him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ J. S. Mill, in his *Political Economy*, had suggested that ‘the State should appropriate the increase of wealth, or part of it, as it arises . . . instead of allowing it to become an unearned appendage to the riches of a particular class’; and had also suggested ‘the valuation of all the land in the country’—a piece of advice which, as we know, has in the last few years been expensively followed by the Liberal Government before it had war and munitions to think of. This right to tax ‘the spontaneous increase of rent’ as it

is called, has been recognised as a policy since Henry George told us that to make the land common property without compensation to the owners 'would be a needless shock to the present customs and habits of thought, which is to be avoided,' and said: 'Let individuals who now hold it (land) still retain, if they want to, what they are pleased to call their land; let them buy and sell and bequeath and devise it. We may safely leave them the shell if we take the kernel. It is not necessary to confiscate the land, it is only necessary to confiscate rent.'

Very good! I may keep the tree if I give you all the plums. This sort of generous honesty has been made the foundation of the propaganda which proposes a single tax on land which is only to amount to the confiscation of the rent, leaving the plucked owner in possession of his worthless acres. If they, 'the people' as they are called, tax us in that way, then undoubtedly the 'inheritance will be theirs,' and the land-owner had better take possession of the only six feet of earth which will, in its permanence, be any comfort to him. Of course the whole of this robbery with the violence of the tax-collector is founded upon a very obvious fallacy. The single-tax gentlemen seem to think that the right to possess a thing must be 'earned,' and that anything that is not earned may be taken away from a man who has it, and given to others who have not earned it any more than he has, who are represented by the State. That is, they claim the right to inquire into the circumstances under which property was acquired; and as they have convinced themselves that the whole value is given to land by the presence, growth, and industry of the people, it is to the people that that form of wealth belongs, and taxation which

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takes it away from these private hands is nothing but an act of justice.

It is the same confusion of thought which founds Socialism—the apostle of that creed saying that all wealth is created by labour, and that therefore all wealth ought to belong to labour. It is quite easy to reason if you assume facts, and the idea that the right to property is earning it is as great a fallacy as the suggestion that all wealth is created by labour. Both are fundamental lies.

The distinction between 'earned' and 'unearned,' which is made the reason for this confiscation by taxation, rests in the suggestion that certain wealth has been created by some men by their unaided exertions, and that other wealth depends for its value on the fact that we are in a community and that the presence of our fellow-men has created this so-called unearned increase. But there is no such thing as individually earned or created wealth, for wealth or value depends on the usefulness of the thing made or discovered—to other people who deserve to have it. When Adam delved, the products in the absence of other people had no 'exchangeable value'; for, as we know, there is no such thing as 'value' in an economic sense except in exchange. The supposed created wealth of a recluse in a world empty of all mankind except himself is not wealth at all, but a curiosity of the maker. It is, then, the existence of men and women that gives value to the coat or book I have made with my hands, just as it gives value, and increased value, if the community goes on growing, to the land I may have inherited or purchased. If I have produced an article which no one desires, I have wasted my time so far as the production of wealth is concerned; and

the fact that there are few or many who desire either an article I have produced, or the services (or labour) I am prepared to render, is the circumstance which determines the value of the thing or the labour. Labour would have no value if it were not for the presence, growth, and desires of the people. It is obvious that value in exchange is only given to anything by the presence here of men and women who desire it, and it is their desires and not my labour which has given the character of wealth to the produce.

But the Land-taxers try to distinguish between land and other things by saying that land is limited in amount ; it is, they say, a monopoly in the hands of the owners, and therefore it is distinguishable from other kinds of property. But it is 'limitation' in amount that gives everything its economic value. Air is useful to our lungs ; but as it is usually, except in a Black Hole of Calcutta, unlimited in amount, it has no value in exchange. But as a fact land is no more limited than any other raw material —wool or cotton or corn or wine. It is because they are not unlimited that they have value, and their value is precisely of the same character as that of land—although the land cannot be mobilised, and these commodities to some extent can. As for the 'monopoly' in land, there is no such thing. A man who publishes a book has a monopoly of publication for a certain number of years, and that privilege is called 'copyright.' It is the same with an invention and the protection of a patent. But land—although one particular piece belongs to A. B., and he has a monopoly of that acre—is just like his coat or his tooth-brush, which is also a monopoly. But, of course, there are many more coats in the world besides

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his, and many more acres in the world besides his 'cabbage patch.'

But the State has done something more than by the aggregation of men in a community rendered the creation of wealth possible. It has really by its laws of inheritance, and by its protection of contracts in our Courts, and of property in our streets, given a guarantee that the owner of any property, whether it be the sedentary earth or the property with heels, shall be at liberty to use it, and to part with it and its fruits at his absolute discretion either by sale or gift. It is true the property must be used for certain limited purposes; but these limits are not the opinion of his neighbours as to how it should be used or disposed of, but the limits of law that a man shall not use his property to the prejudice of the State which guarantees it, or to the detriment of the moral laws which are recognised by the community. Subject to these limitations, a man is guaranteed by the State the right to do what he pleases with his own, and any denial of these rights which constitute private property in the hands of individuals or corporations would be an absolute breach of faith on the part of the State. For instance, a tax of twenty shillings in the pound on income would not be taxation but confiscation. A tax upon the increased value of land, owing to the fact that it is near a town, is the same thing as a tax on the increased profits of a lawyer or a doctor because the population of a town has doubled in ten years.

Of course the State must do its business (although probably it has taken to too many trades), and to enable it to do that it must impose taxes. These taxes must necessarily fall upon those who can pay them, and not upon those who can't. But when the

State taxes one class in a community for the benefit of another, when it takes money from the rich to endow the poor, when it makes the well-to-do provide houses and pensions for the ill-to-do, it is going beyond the bounds of legitimate taxation, and is confiscating the property of Peter to pay Paul, with no better excuse than a Dick Turpin who took from the road traveller and gave the money away in alms to a beggar.

But 'earning,' in the sense it is used by the Land-taxers, is intended to convey the idea that in some cases men have deserved or merited what they have got, and that in other cases they have not deserved the gains they have acquired. There is, of course, a certain amount of truth in the distinction between property which is acquired by fraud or larceny, and property which is acquired under the sanction of the law. But that is not the sense in which these reformers use the word 'deserved.' If they think they can apportion property in proportion to the moral deserts of the labourers, they are hoping to do the impossible. Who can determine whether a Caruso or a Harry Lauder has morally deserved his gains more than the chimney-sweep or the slater on the roof? And yet the services the former render are in a sense unique, and are paid for in proportion to the difficulty of procuring them—the services of the latter can be replaced by an ordinary workman.

The fallacious idea of deserts has been seen through by the Socialists, who have come to the conclusion that men should not be paid according to their ability or skill, but according to their needs. If the needs are reduced to a minimum of enough to eat and drink and a roof to cover one, these are capable of ascertainment, but the ability or skill or deserts or

'earning' of a workman are conundrums which can never be guessed.

But those who admit the rights of private property, and claim the right to distinguish between classes of property, and tax according to their ideas of the merits of the acquisition—and even Mr. Winston Churchill, as we understand him, has suggested such a ridiculous inquisition—are on ground which is mined with fallacies, and which is easily reduced to a crater underneath their reforming feet.

During one of the elections I wrote a paper on 'Unearned Increment' which was published, and I have no doubt, although I have not re-read the paper, I used some of the arguments I have set out above. The paper was noticed at some length by Mr. Blatchford in the *Clarion*, who admitted the force of the argument as to land. He said: 'Against Liberal taxers and against the single taxers that is a perfectly sound argument, but it does not touch the Socialists' position at all. We are for the expropriation of unearned increment wherever found.' But that is scarcely a right way of stating the Socialists' position, which is not only the appropriation of 'increment' but of wealth, and that on the principle which I stated above, that 'labour produces all wealth, and that therefore to labour all wealth belongs.'

Now the absurdity of that proposition is to suppose that labour can own anything, and it is also in the erroneous use of the word 'labour' as meaning present active labour—which does not produce all wealth, but has to be assisted in the enterprise by dead past labour, which is capital. The man who digs does not himself produce the furrow without the spade or the plough which was produced by some other worker. Indeed he cannot go out to work at

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all unless he has eaten bread made of wheat which was grown a year ago, and it was past labour which sowed the wheat and gathered the harvest. Indeed he cannot come 'home' at night unless he has a home to come to, and that is a house which was built years ago and was produced by the labour of hands which may belong to the dead. It is, therefore, not true to say that present labour produces all wealth, for it doesn't, without the help of capital, in spade, in wheat, and in roof; and it is therefore untrue, and would be quite unjust to infer, that all wealth belonged to present labour, for it doesn't. Now, how do we pay for past labour? By interest, by return on capital—and past labour or capital is just as much entitled to its fair wage as present labour. For present labour to lay its hands on the products of past labour is nothing but theft. I therefore see no more logic in the Socialist grab than in the Land-taxers' grab. They are both footpads, although they pretend to be tax-collectors.

## CHAPTER XXV

### SOME POLITICAL GOSSIP

While practising in Parliament I was not a party politician—When I put on the uniform—After contesting East Bradford had Sir William Priestley as a committee man—Was not a member of a political club before 1906—Fought the election in Dumfriesshire ‘off my own bat’—W. H. Maxwell—The Duke of Buccleuch—Sir R. Buchanan Jardine—In East Bradford in 1909-10 some prominent politicians came to help—Mr. Balfour, Mr. Lyttelton, Lord Cawdor, and Lord Percy—The candidates—‘Fought for my own hand’—Began political adventure in 1903—‘New Fiscal Policy’—Letters to a newspaper—Republished ‘Letters to an Elector’—Mr. Marshall Hall—‘Coming Social Revolution,’ 1908, and other works—Distrust of Mr. Chamberlain in early days—1903, adopted Tariff Reform—True instinct of statesman—A country and her satellites—Imperialism—Trade partnership—Reluctance of some Conservatives to adopt the policy—Mr. Balfour one of the ‘reluctants’—Dinner at Mr. Chamberlain’s after meeting of Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain.

IT was said by some one that every man should have a religion, but that no wise man should say what it was. It was my view while I was still practising before committees of Parliament, that although every man was entitled to have some political creed, it was better policy for the counsel practising in committee rooms not to be avowed politicians, attached by their declared opinions to one or other of the parties which struggle for the upper hand in State affairs. It was only when I expected the results of an election in Dumfriesshire might make it necessary for me to give up the practice of my

profession that I became a declared politician, and it was the toward or untoward result of that election which enabled me to continue to practise even after I had put on the uniform of party. The reason for the abstention from active politics of gentlemen who are practising before committees, which commended itself to me, was that committees are composed of politicians—some of them of one party, some of another—and that it is wiser there should be no feeling either of political antagonism or sympathy between the counsel and the members of the tribunal. Indeed so delicate is the position upon occasion that a counsel may have as one of his judges a member of Parliament whose seat he contested, and whom in the heat of election rhetoric he felt called upon to abuse. Indeed mine is a case in point. After my failure to secure the seat at East Bradford I was frequently before the Local Legislation Committee, of which Sir William Priestley, the member for that constituency, was a member. But I would like to say here that the friendly relations between us were never strained.

I only mention this matter as an illustration of the inconvenience of a clash of politics between a counsel and a committee man, and as an explanation of my studious aloofness from politics in my earlier years. It was not until 1905-6 that I sought a seat in the House of Commons, and up to that time I was not a member of any political club. I was not, therefore, in the tangle of wires which are there for the pulling, and which are designated by the fine name of political life. I did not consort with politicians, and such opinions as I had were not the echoes of the gossip of a club or a coterie. Indeed when I stood for Dumfriesshire, instead of having a great many

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politicians to help me in the campaign—many elections are a babel—I do not think I had any speech made for me by any recognised politician. Mr. W. H. Maxwell, who had represented the county for some years, was good enough to try to speak at one meeting, but the people would not listen to him, which is a curious instance of political gratitude. The present Duke of Buccleuch, Sir R. Buchanan Jardine, and others were good enough to take the chair at some of my meetings, but I think I may say with truth that I did all the political speaking myself, and that, as an enemy might say, may account for the disastrous result of the election.

Even at Bradford, in 1909-10, I was somewhat of a detached politician. It is true that during my candidature there, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Lyttelton, Lord Cawdor, and Lord Percy came down and spoke in St. George's Hall. But they were in a sense joint-stock politicians, and the big meetings were held in the interest, not of the candidate for East Bradford only, but in the interests of Lord Howick who was candidate for Central Bradford, Sir Ernest Flower who was standing again for West Bradford, and Professor Hewins who was the adopted Unionist candidate for Shipley. In East Bradford itself, except for the loyal help of the chairman and members of my committee, I—like the smith of Perth in Sir Walter Scott's novel—'fought for my own hand.'

I mention these quite unimportant facts to explain that even although I have passed under the harrow of two contested elections in the Unionist interest, I was and am, as it were, to some extent out of the game of politics, and therefore claim as an outsider to see as much, at any rate, of the game as those who are between the goals.

I began my political adventure in 1903, when I was adopted as the prospective Unionist candidate for Dumfriesshire, after Mr. W.H. Maxwell had announced that he would not seek re-election. Once launched, I went full speed ahead. I was not only busy with my tongue but with my pen. I wrote for a local paper circulating in the constituency, a series of articles on the 'New Fiscal Policy,' and these were republished in the autumn of 1903. A little later certain 'Political Essays,' written at a much earlier date for the *Westminster Review*, and some later essays were republished in book form. 'Letters to an Elector,' which had first seen the light in the *Bradford Daily Argus*, were issued as a book in 1906, and later it was followed by 'Further Letters to an Elector' and some political fables.

I find as I am gossiping that Mr. Marshall Hall, at the Putney Constitutional Club, was kind enough—after speaking of what he called the monopoly I had in my profession—to say of my 'New Fiscal Policy': 'The opinion of Mr. Balfour Browne upon a matter of figures and political economy was as valuable as any man's he had ever come in contact with. The best pamphlet ever written upon Tariff Reform was written by him'—which I quote more as a recollection of friendliness upon his part than as a true estimate of the value of my poor pamphlet.

But while I am cataloguing my contributions to political literature—which is an ephemeral matter that passes like froth—I may make the list more complete. In 1906 I wrote on the 'Coming Social Revolution' in the *National Review*. In 1908 I lectured in Glasgow on the 'Economics of Socialism,' which was reprinted by the Anti-Socialist Union in 1909, and they also republished a pamphlet or lecture

on 'State and Municipal Trading' in 1910. I mention these facts as a sort of ground for the assertion that I am entitled to have some political recollections. In most cases such a title would be appropriated by a man who had been in the great 'mash-tun,' the House of Commons, and been connected in the actual brewing operations which turn out the fermented liquor of legislation. But every one is entitled to his memories, and 'these are of them.'

I had at one time considerable distrust of Mr. Chamberlain. When he talked about 'holding the rich to ransom,' he was adopting the attitude and the language of a political bandit. I thought at that time that he was a mere clever politician—and politics are for to-day, like popularity; statesmanship for time, like fame. It was while he was in this aggressive attitude that I met him first at dinner, at the house of Sir Edward Carbutt, who was Radical member for the Monmouth Boroughs. But in 1903 I came to a very different conclusion as to Mr. Chamberlain—perhaps too he had grown into the maturity of political wisdom. His past had been an education in politics. His connection with municipal affairs in Birmingham had been an admirable rehearsal for the full-dress performance at Westminster. He had, too, rejected the disintegrating policy of Home Rule at a time when, as I have pointed out elsewhere, recent history had been teaching the world that integration, combination, Imperialism, was the leading idea of the century. In 1903 he bravely—not forgetting the failure of the earlier effort at a true trade policy—adopted the policy of Tariff Reform. I had then determined—perhaps unwisely, for people and sometimes politicians have no honour in their own country—to stand for Dumfriesshire,

and, as I say, I wrote the articles which were gathered together under the title of the 'New Fiscal Policy.' The little book went quickly to a second edition, for which a note from Mr. Chamberlain stood as prologue :

DEAR MR. BALFOUR BROWNE,—I thoroughly appreciate the value of your book.

The pamphlet had a certain vogue, but I dare say convinced nobody who was not already convinced.

But it was not about these forgotten pages that I meant to speak here, but about Mr. Chamberlain.

He was an alert, dapper man, with a very quick intellect; perhaps a little dressy. His orchid and his monocle were not the things you noted in his appearance, any more than you noted the butterfly signature or monograph in Whistler's pictures or etchings; but a business acuteness, a sense of certainty that the man was all there, was the quick impression he made upon one's memory. I believe he had the true instinct that a statesman must not merely be a carping critic but a constructive politician—that what the world wants is acts, not words. He had the sound idea that a great country with its satellites of colonies can be continued in greatness by a centripetal policy like Imperialism, and that Imperialism can be brought about not merely by touching the imagination of a people, but as a business proposition, by touching the pockets of the workers to whom our Reform Bills have handed over the sceptre of power. It was on these, I think sound, grounds that he adopted the policy of Tariff Reform and Colonial Preference.

Imperialism has since his time had a marvellous prosperity during the haggard time of war. The war has drawn the bonds of friendship between the

Mother Country and the Colonies, both in arms, closer than they ever were. The world-dominion excursion of Germany has brought about a magnificent unity of patriotic purpose—curiously in contrast with what was at one time called ‘splendid isolation’—which could only have been achieved or approached in time of peace by a trade partnership.

I am not discussing the problem here. We have seen, and our Colonies have told us, that the war really began in time of peace, and that there was a trade penetration of our arch-enemy which jeopardised the position of Great Britain. We have heard what Australia had to tell us through Mr. Hughes. But I am speaking of the time before the war, when under a mask of friendship Germany was the enemy within our household, and was stealing our trade under the foolish hospitality of our Free Trade, while she protected her own industries from our competition. Mr. Chamberlain saw this, and set a courageous spirit to protest against it. I was with him eagerly, and ran Tariff Reform for all it was worth both in Dumfriesshire and in East Bradford.

At the time of these elections there was a want of eye-to-eye seeing between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour.<sup>1</sup> The former was emphatic, the latter was cautious. It was necessary to choose between the two. I followed Mr. Chamberlain, and was almost angry that philosophic doubt should be allowed to unnerve the arm which should strike a blow for Britain. You will remember that this philosophical indecision upon the part of Mr. Balfour lasted some time, but that on one occasion, after the election of

<sup>1</sup> I find in Lord Hugh Cecil's book on Conservatism that even now he writes: ‘These motives coalesce with the imperialist zeal for the greatness of the country to make Conservatives adopt, whether wisely or foolishly, the policy of Tariff Reform.’

1910, there was a historic meeting between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour, and an agreement was come to. I was dining with Mr. Chamberlain in Prince's Gardens on the evening of the day of that meeting. Several other 'good men and true' were there that night: Sir George Doughty—a robust politician with a ruddy round face,<sup>1</sup> and a voice big enough to fill the Albert Hall—Mr. Arnold Forster, Mr. Claud Hay, and some others. I remember that after dinner, when the ladies had gone, Mr. Chamberlain, referring to the conference he had had that day with Mr. Balfour, said: 'Gentlemen, I have got him!'—and I think his fingers in his palm made his hand like a fist showing the grip—and then he told us of the interview.

I would not have remembered the incident so well—although I do recollect that when I was going, Mr. Chamberlain charged me with some slight mission to Sir Edward Carson—had it not been recalled to me a few weeks afterwards by a gentleman whose name I will not mention, but who is now in a very great political position and in high office—who, saying he had been dining with Chamberlain that night, told me the whole story with the very words, 'I have got him.' But the curious thing about his story was that the gentleman who told me, as if at first hand, had not been there, and I had!

<sup>1</sup> Some one, a little mischievously, once said, referring to Sir George's complexion, that, 'like Cæsar, he had passed the Rubicund.'

## CHAPTER XXVI

### HERBERT SPENCER

Indices and the text—‘Board of Trade can do anything’—What an Act of Parliament can do—Herbert Spencer thought Parliament did too much—Used to meet the ‘great man’ on Sunday evenings—The cut of a schoolmaster—Picture at Athenæum Club—Trained as an engineer—Mechanical view of the universe—Problem remains unsolved—His work, *The Man versus The State*—Huxley’s ‘Administrative Nihilism’—In defence of State education—Could conceive the existence of an Established Church—Huxley in the lower smoking-room—My dispute with Herbert Spencer—Spencer interviewed—His opinion on liberty in America—‘Independence’ in politics impossible.

IT was said that in the index to a certain law-book there was to be found this reference to Mr. Justice Best: ‘Best—his great mind.’ But when the text was referred to, it was found that the learned judge had said that he had a ‘great mind to commit the witness,’ who no doubt had been ‘drawing the long-bow.’ Two gentlemen were good enough to assist me in the compilation of the index to the first edition of my book, *The Law of Railways*, and on looking over it I found this comprehensive reference: ‘Board of Trade—can do anything.’

Now although that was a mistake, there is a very widespread belief amongst the people of this country that ‘an Act of Parliament can do anything,’ and there were many men, and Herbert Spencer was among them, who thought that Acts of Parliament had done a great deal too much. While I was still

reading for the Bar I used to meet that 'great man,' of 'massive achievements' as I then thought, pretty often on Sunday evenings at the house of some connections of Professor Masson who were very kind to me. Spencer was, I believe, the son of a schoolmaster, and he himself had the schoolmaster's manner, which has a twinge of superiority in it because it is made out of the tyranny over boys. Every man carries his pulpit about with him, and as to Herbert Spencer when he came, his schoolmaster's desk came with him. He had a face with a good brow—a place for a big brain—side-whiskers, and a clean-shaven chin. The picture we have of him at the Athenæum Club shows him a little older than he was in the days when I used to meet him in that house in the Regent's Park.

Although he impressed me with his schoolmaster manner, I don't think he had been to school, but had been educated by his father and uncle, and he meant to be an engineer. He made certain inventions between 1837 and 1846, but never invented anything notable until he invented what he thought was a 'philosophy,' but which was, after all, only a 'stickit engineer's' mechanical view of the universe—a 'philosophy,' if we use the proud word, which ended with this articulate sigh: 'The ultimate mystery is as great as ever, seeing that there remains unsolved the question, What *determines* the co-ordination of actions?' Von Baer had expressed the course of 'development through which every plant and animal passes as the change from homogeneity to heterogeneity,' and this poor formula, which tells us nothing, was the foundation of Herbert Spencer's philosophy.

But here we have nothing to do with his *First*

*Principles*, but rather with his view as to the limits of State interference with private initiative, or, in other words, the questions, Can Acts of Parliament do everything? and, Have Acts of Parliament done too much? Thus in *The Man versus The State* he says: 'Dictatorial measures rapidly multiplied have tended continually to narrow the liberties of individuals'; and even the headings of some of the chapters will show what he thought—as, for instance, 'The New Toryism,' 'The Coming Slavery,' 'The Sins of Legislators,' and so on. But there is one sentence I quote with agreement: 'The great political superstition of the period is the divine right of Parliaments.' 'Put not your trust in legislation,' he says in one of his essays (his *Essays* are, to my mind, his most useful work); and it is quite worth while weighing that doctrine in the balance in days when people trust to nothing else, and when only the Syndicalists who desire the tyranny of the trade unions are prepared to dispute the significance of political action in relation to labour and capital, where the battle of the times was being fought before the larger war began. Indeed, that battle would be raging still but for the way that labour has been bribed to hold its clamorous tongue 'until the people have avenged themselves upon their enemies.'

Herbert Spencer then accused the State of blunders in the discharge of its duties as to the administration of justice, of jobbery, and incompetence in relation to military and naval matters; and while he praised the doings—which no doubt have been great—of private enterprise, he asked with a sneer, Is this the ground on which we are to trust the State and distrust private enterprise? And the conclusion he came to was that the State was a bad, defaulting

trustee in its more legitimate functions, and that nothing more should be put into its trembling, blundering, thieving hands. This is not the place to follow, or even to try to answer his arguments. That indeed was attempted by Huxley in his lecture on 'Administrative Nihilism,' which he delivered at the Midland Institute in 1871. In that address he wanted to justify the State interference with education, and in doing so he was driven into a curious corner. Taking the creed of those who followed Herbert Spencer as 'Thou shalt not allow any man to interfere with the liberty of any other man,' he pointed out that his next-door neighbour's drains might poison him, and that the sewer was as deadly a weapon as a pistol; that if one man's children go unvaccinated, it is as much a crime as leaving strychnine lozenges about which another man's children might eat. He was always happy in his illustrations. As to the justifiability of State education, his argument was 'that every man of high natural ability who is both ignorant and miserable, is as great a danger to society as a rocket without a stick is to people who fire it. Misery is a match that never goes out; genius as an explosive power beats gunpowder hollow; and if knowledge which should give that power of guidance is wanting, the chances are not small that the rocket will simply run amuck among friends and foes.' This is all very picturesque, but not very convincing; and now we come to the corner he was driven into. If there is to be State education, where is it to stop? Are you to teach a man to read and not to be good, and if you do, do you not really equip him to become a greater danger than ever to society? But Huxley faced the difficulty, for he said: 'I can conceive the

existence of an Established Church which would be a blessing to the country'; but this Established Church is to teach only Huxley's own religion. Then he says: 'Depend upon it, if such a Church existed no one would seek to disestablish it.' Well, I for one would. But I do not want to argue with Huxley. I never met him to speak to, but once, in the lower smoking-room at the Athenæum. I was so near that I could not help overhearing him. The portrait of him by the Hon. John Collier, in the National Portrait Gallery, is like enough the man. There were furrows between his cheeks and upper lip, deep-set eyes, a blob of a nose, side-whiskers and an upstanding thick head of black hair. It was with reference to his hair that I was an eavesdropper. Huxley was telling some one how he regretted his thick head of hair, and how he did not see his way to baldness, for, he continued, he had always looked forward to the luxury of rubbing his bald head with a silk pocket handkerchief, and that was denied him by his obstinate bristles. But he had obstinate bristles in his character as well as on his head.

But I have quite inadvertently been diverted from Herbert Spencer. He was, upon one of the occasions when I met him, enlarging with a ferule of a finger on his thesis that 'if we define the primary State duty to be the protecting of each individual against others, then all other State action comes under the definition of protecting each individual against himself—against his own stupidity, his own idleness, his own improvident rashness or other defect, his own incapacity for doing something or other which should be done.' And he went on to enlarge—with a copious memory and a wealth of illustration—on the many muddling blunders which

the State had made by enlarging its foolish functions of apron-string government, and by passing Acts of Parliament which imposed duties clearly beyond the legitimate work of a State if it was to continue to exist. He really took a very gloomy view of the future prosperity of a country which did such foolish things, and in a moment of pessimism proclaimed the decline and fall of this stupid country. I was young—and perhaps, like most of the young, impertinent—but here I put in my word, which was to this effect: That if Mr. Spencer was right, it was a foolish thing to try to prevent such muddling, as it would only be keeping alive a nation which was evidently, from his criticisms, unfit to survive; and that, according to his own theories, there must be a struggle for existence between nations as well as between individuals, and it would be right to let Britain 'dree its weird.'

This, interjected in the rolling whirl of his talk, was suffered with impatience, and he fell back on the prejudice of patriotism as a reason for his wanting to coerce a nation to do what he wanted, while every individual was to be free to do what he himself chose. I went home to my lodgings feeling quite proud of having had a fling with my pebble at this Goliath of Gath.

There was, however, a piece of his pessimistic talk, not to me but to an American interviewer after he had been two months in the United States, which has an interest for us and is perhaps worth preserving. At first he seemed to kick against the prick of the interviewer's questions, but ultimately he stood and delivered himself. So far as I know, the interview only appeared in some newspapers.

Herbert Spencer had suggested that the English

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people were gradually losing their freedom, and the interviewer asked, 'Do you mean this as a suggestion that we are doing the same?' He answered: 'It seems to me you are. You retain the forms of freedom. But, so far as I can gather, there has been considerable loss of substance. It is true that those who rule you do not do it by means of retainers armed with swords; but they do it through regiments of men armed with voting papers, who obey the word of command as loyally as did the dependents of the feudal nobles, and who thus enable their leaders to override the general will and make the community submit to their exactions as effectually as their prototypes of old. It is doubtless true that each of your citizens votes for the candidate he chooses for this or that office, from President downwards; but his hand is guided by the power behind, which leaves him scarcely any choice. "Use your political power as we tell you, or else throw it away," is the alternative offered to the citizen. The political machinery as it is now worked has little resemblance to that contemplated at the outset of your political life. Manifestly those who framed your constitution never dreamed that twenty thousand citizens would go to the poll led by a "boss." America exemplifies at the other end of the social scale a change analogous to that which has taken place under sundry despotsms.'

This ought to interest us, for a good deal of what he said about America is true of this country to-day. We still talk as if we had a King, Lords, and Commons, but the King—like the Mikado in Japan, who was looked upon as a sacred person and was therefore allowed to do nothing, while all the power was in the hands of the Shogun—the King is a splendid

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figurehead for the ship of State, but he dare not touch the rudder. The House of Lords is a doll's house, and any legislation which the Commons approves of through two years must become law. The Commons! Then all the power is in the Commons, 'Broad based upon a people's will'? Nonsense: the House of Commons is the obsequious servant of the party that has a majority of its members in its pocket. And this, as Lord Hugh Cecil has pointed out, 'does not merely mean that the minority count for nothing; it also means that the members even of the majority are rather the servants than the masters of their party. There is every year less and less independence among Members of Parliament; every year they are more and more disposed to vote strictly as their whips direct.' Here, then, we have the 'boss' system in full swing. But what about the 'people's will'? A man can surely force his way into the House of Commons although he may be a nonentity when he gets there? But even that is not true. The disastrous fate at the polls of gentlemen who have called themselves independent candidates has shown that the organisation is more powerful than the man, and that, as Herbert Spencer said, you must vote as we tell you or else throw your vote away. An independent man like Mr. Harold Cox has not a chance in Parliament, and so has to take to the refuge of literature.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### ABOUT POLITICS AND PARTIES

Politics a matter of feeling—Prejudiced voters at elections—Party government no longer in evidence—Division of the spoils—The two-party system—House divided against itself—Coalition Government to 'Win the war'—The group system—A vanished fourth party—War and unpreparedness—Only began the war after two years' fighting—If a machine breaks down in war, is it really useful in peace?—Germany's peaceful penetration—Arrangements after the war—Wrote long ago on 'Party Government'—Letter from J. A. Froude.

MEN very often think that politics is a matter of reason, while as a fact it is a matter of feeling. It is not logic which determines how we shall vote in an election, it is custom and habit which have been forming during years of unconscious education and prejudices which are stronger than any argument. The man who is in or wants to be in the House of Commons may be in a sense a calculating machine, and while no doubt his creed is to see which side his bread is buttered on, he may determine his actions in relation to the possible number of votes he must win or lose by his political conduct. But the voters themselves are influenced by these wayward tendencies in human nature, which defy the compass and chart, and sail by winds of doctrine which blow where they list.

People seem to believe that the system of party government is still in existence in this country. There is an idea which survives from more primitive

times that the two great parties, as it were, share the spoils of the country, and that the determining court as to the portfolios is a General Election. There was a pleasant simplicity about this bandit form of government. To allow one set of men to go on in power for ever was clearly impossible. As there were two sets of men there must be a kind of 'share and share alike,' and the way to determine who was at any particular time to have the power and the pelf of office was for each of these parties to try and ingratiate itself with the constituencies—which they did in the old time by means of ready money, but more recently by political bills of exchange or promissory notes.

But the simplicity of the two-party system has long since passed away. Indeed, events have condemned it. Even Macaulay spoke of an ideal time when none were for the party and all were for the State—a Utopian dream which it is impossible to realise. But that a house or a country continually divided against itself lacks the first requisite of a building, stability, became evident in the course of the war, and what we call a Coalition Government was formed with the express purpose of doing the business in hand—Winning the war. The term Coalition was intended no doubt to maintain the personal identity of the parties, and at the same time to sink the personal animosities and personal ambitions which would, with such materials as an Antwerp week-end excursion, a Dardanelles expedition, a Mesopotamia mess, and a Balkan muddle, have wrecked two or three Governments. But apart from our emergency expedient—which, of course, condemns our past methods—there is in time of peace an entire change from the bivalve system of politics, and instead of two great parties

you have a fission going on and producing groups, and those who are in or want to get power must play not only to the 'gallery,' the country, but to these their fellow-actors on the stage of politics.

We had at one time a vanishing fourth party, which no doubt served the purposes of the four gentlemen who composed it. But now we have substantial groups like the Nationalist party and Labour party, and these must be captured by your politician if he is to govern.

But in saying a word about party government, one cannot overlook the fact that in the greatest emergency which we have had in politics the system broke down, and that a Government composed of the leaders of the two parties was formed to conduct the paramount business of the war. I am not going back upon the question who was responsible for the fact that the nation did not see before its nose, although Lord Roberts warned it. I am not going to inquire who was responsible for our unpreparedness for war. The fact seems to be certain that we were unprepared, and Sir William Robertson tells us that it was two years after the war commenced that 'we began to fight.' But is it not obvious from the very fact that politics—which is a game played with power and office for the stakes, or a battle fought with the spoils for the victor—was put to sleep, that we have lived in a truce at home if we have lived in the turmoil of war abroad? It would occur to most people who think about politics and parties at all, that if the machine by which the country has been run in time of peace breaks down and has to be replaced by another when we are at war, there must be something wrong with the works of that engine. If party government cannot be trusted

to guide us in time of war, if the jangling of parties is a serious disadvantage when we are face to face with an enemy like Germany, can it be relied upon to carry out the enterprise of government in peace? It is, as we have seen, an error to suppose that we have ever been at peace. The fact is that Germany has been preparing for war for forty years; that she has conducted a subtle campaign during all the time we thought we were living in 'soft peace' is certain. Can it be right, then, that we should have been fighting over the internecine affairs of politics, and playing into the hands of enemies all these years without finding out that we were really attempting to sail a ship by means of mutiny? We have condemned politics, we have condemned party government in our sore distress; are we, after the war, going back to these silly arrangements which were found incapable of meeting our requirements when the paramount interests of the country were concerned, and which cannot be trusted when the equally paramount interests of the country in time of peace are in the balance?

By the way, I wrote an essay on 'Party Government' in 1886, reviewing *Popular Government* by Sir Henry Sumner Maine, and *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity* by Fitzjames Stephen, for the *Westminster Review*. It was republished in 1907 in my *Political Essays*. On the occasion of its publication in the *Westminster* I received the following not uninteresting letter from Mr. Froude:

5 ONSLOW GARDENS,  
2nd May 1886.

DEAR SIR,—I have read your essay on Party Government with entire approval. You might write, however, less diffidently. It has become now an organised evil in the heart

of us, and a civil war which can have no end. A war purpose is fought out and the principle contended for is decided. In Parliamentary war the contending parties renew their struggle every six years in contact with the constituencies.

Some remedy must be found if the British Empire is not to go to pieces, though none of us can say in what direction to look for help.—Yours faithfully,

J. A. FROUDE.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### NINETEENTH-CENTURY POLITICS

The great political conflicts of the century—Even in my memory there was the Fiscal controversy and Home Rule on the carpet, and the House of Lords has been reduced to an assembly of ineffectives—Cat-and-dog politics—Catholic Emancipation, 1829—The Reform Bill, 1832—Repeal of the Corn Laws, 1846—Household Suffrage, 1867—Burke's doctrine—The wisdom of Catholic Emancipation—Passed by the Conservatives—Liberty and the Magna Carta—Tried by his peers—Corn Laws repealed by Sir Robert Peel—Power handed over to middle classes—Household Suffrage again a Conservative measure—A race to reform—The Dean of St. Paul's on politicians.

THIS is not in any sense a treatise on politics, but is what it purports to be, the desultory recollections of one who has been on the treadmill of affairs and has kept on tramping on that apparatus which, while it is punitive, effects little or nothing in the way of work. My memory serves me as to two of the great political conflicts—the Home Rule battle of 1886-95, which ended, some supposed, with the Parliament Act, but which still seems to go on in curious shapes in the present day; and the Fiscal controversy, which began in 1903. As for the Parliament Act with its unveracious preamble, it rendered the House of Lords an assembly of ineffectives; and as for Tariff Reform, it has assumed a new form for those who have been considering what is to happen in connection with allies' and enemies' trade after the war.

Of course in the last two years we have been told

that politics have ceased to exist, although in my view they are only sleeping, and I noted that even in their dreams the honours and rewards are somewhat equally divided between those who were party politicians before the formation of a Coalition Government.

But looking back over the last century to the history of the cat-and-dog life of politics in that much maligned time—which in comparison with the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth has been called the specious times of Queen Victoria—there have been, besides the conflicts I have mentioned here, four transcendent controversies which have left indelible marks on the times.

There was Catholic Emancipation, which was achieved in 1829, the Reform Bill in 1832, the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, and the Household Suffrage Bill in 1867. As to the merits of this march of Democracy I will say nothing—it is an accomplished fact. The wise words of an early, and one of the greatest Conservatives, Burke—‘I would not exclude alteration neither ; but even when I changed it would be to preserve’ ; and in another place : ‘Thus by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the State, in what we improve we are never wholly new : in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete’—have been forgotten ; and the dictum of Henry VIII. when he abolished the monasteries, that if he pulled down the nests the rooks would fly away, seems to have been the guiding principle of the democratic changes which have been made, in the onward sweep of waves which have obliterated landmarks. But one thing will strike even a running reader of history, and that is the sorry part Conservatism has played in these great conflicts. As to the first, to allow every one in a

country to partake in the government of the country, whether he owes allegiance to Rome or, say, to a foreign state like Germany, seems to be a very questionable policy. We have been complaining of the penetration of Germany into every department of our commerce and our industries, and since the war began we have been weeding our garden—but your Catholic Emancipation hands over the sceptre to these peaceful penetrants who choose to settle in our midst and to become naturalised. We see the result of such a proceeding in the hyphenated policy of the United States during the war. But there you are: the Catholic Emancipation Act is on the Statute-book after a long resistance on the part of the Tory party—and it was put there by the Conservatives. It was the same with the Repeal of the Corn Laws. These stood for the political power of the land-owner in his country. The liberty which was secured to the barons by the *Magna Carta* was not the liberty we talk about in these days, which is freedom for every one to do as he likes, but was the preservation in the barons' hands of the liberties and privileges they had hitherto enjoyed, and which had been threatened by Henry II. It was very different from the concession, say, of the Permissive Bill, which Lord Neaves in one of his songs described as a measure

‘To permit me to prevent you  
From having your glass of grog.’

The Great Charter preserved the privileges and exemptions which the barons enjoyed, one of which by the way exists to this day—their right to be tried by their peers, which was in fact a defiance of the King's Court or *Aula Regis*. Now the Corn Laws, which went to the wall in 1846, were a special economic privilege which had been conceded to those owning and cultivating land. Of course the

Conservatives fought against the repeal, until Sir Robert Peel betrayed the party by passing the repeal himself. His practical statesmanship—which is often a fine name for pusillanimity—was convinced by an impending civil war and an actual famine in Ireland ; and the result of this retreat of the army was the handing over the power in the country into the hands of the manufacturing middle classes. It would seem, indeed, that Conservatism was a game which began in bluster and ended by pilfering the policy of its opponents. The same thing happened when Disraeli and Derby were in office. They 'dished the Whigs,' as if 'dishing' was statesmanship. The policy of Conservatism was to 'change' so as to 'preserve.' The Household Suffrage Bill of 1867 was handing over the keys of power to the mob, and that by statesmen who called themselves Conservatives, but who educated their party in the principles of Democracy. It is quite true all these changes might have come in time, but it is somewhat curious to find the party that is there wisely to preserve our constitution running their rivals a race to bring about such momentous changes. But look at any Unionist Manual or Campaign Guide, and you will find that the boast of the party is that it has done more for the people than the Liberals have. It is a race between the parties which is to reform the most, and so secure the pay of office for their perfidy to principle. No doubt when the war is over and 'soft peace has come again,' this war of politics will begin again, and there will still be attempts at outflanking such as those that were supposed at the time to be successful, in 1829, 1846, and 1867.

'In France and the United States,' says the Dean of St. Paul's, 'politics is hardly a profession for an honourable man.' What about England ?

## CHAPTER XXIX

### HUMOUR AT ELECTIONS

No humour at elections—Candidates' stories—A heckler answered—The atmosphere at election time not edifying—Campbell-Bannerman's story—Whisky and a torchlight procession—Compared with various brews—'Show me a Radical'—The mistake of a chairman at Mr. Lloyd George's meeting—'Commanding reticence'—Women and Tariff Reform—'England for the English'—Mere bluff—Chinese labour and undergraduates—Sir W. Agnew in Lancashire—Mr. Guinness and a Dublin election—Lord Spencer and the lumbago—Epitaph on a wife—Quickly 'done-for' peer—Ironmaster and the Decalogue—A teetotaller.

THERE is no humour at elections. In a well-known book the index had the words, 'Snakes in Ireland,' and when you turned to the text you were told there were no snakes in Ireland. And so it is with my 'heading' and confession. If you think of the thousands of speeches which are made at election times, it is really a curious fact that they are for the most part a sandy desert without the redemption of a single oasis of fresh humour. Of course candidates tell stories, and perhaps a jest-book is more indispensable to a politician than his Campaign Guide; but, then, these stories are not their own, and the telling of them is not evidence of humour at elections, but rather a confession of the want of it. There have been some humorous sayings, of course, even in my time, on the arid platform. Thus the candidate who, being young, was rudely asked 'if his mother knew he was out?' replied that 'to-morrow

she would hear that he was in,' was very happily on the spot. Another candidate that I knew, who had been kicked by a pony or a donkey that mowed the lawn when he was a child, and had his nose broken, was at one of his meetings asked by a heckler how he came by his broken nose? The chairman intervened and said that was not a proper question to ask, but the candidate said: 'It does not matter, Mr. Chairman, this is not the first time that a donkey has had a fling at me.'

But as a rule an election is no joke, and there are very few good jokes at elections. Indeed candidates as a rule, like the Scotsman, 'joke with difficulty,' or are, as the Scotsman defined 'coyness,' 'backward in coming forward.' Candidates are as a rule quite satisfied if they can turn the tables for an instant on some insulting questioner, and enjoy

'The trivial triumph of a silly jibe.'

But the atmosphere at election time is not one which is suited to humour. A candidate is really on his trial before a jury of his countrymen, and the verdict of the poll may either promote him to the honour he aspires to or relegate him to the outer darkness of ordinary life. 'Have you considered what you are going to do if you get in?' asked an interviewer of a candidate. 'No,' said the candid politician; 'but what the devil will I do if I don't get in?' Perhaps he was thinking of his wife.

Of course the platform at such times is as noisy as Babel, with various tongues, but it is generally as dull as a Sunday-school and, as a Scotsman would say, 'not so edifying.'

Still there are some happinesses even in these dull places. Thus Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman once

told a fairly good story which illustrated the characteristics of Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Irishmen.

A gentleman who had a good collection of china, deplored to his friends the carelessness of a man-servant whose fingers, as the Scotch would say, 'were all thumbs,' said he did not know what to do with him. 'Why not dismiss him?' said the practical Englishman. 'But he is a good servant,' said his host. 'Stop it out of his wages,' said the Scotsman, with the excellent caution of his race. 'But,' said the master, 'he breaks more than his wages would pay for.' 'Why not raise his wages?' asked the Irishman.

It was a Mr. O'Sullivan who said that a certain whisky was like a torchlight procession going down a man's throat. But Sir Stafford Northcote had the questionable taste to use the story at a political meeting in Edinburgh. The Scotch comment on his speech was that 'it must have been Irish whisky.'

Once at a New Year's meeting at rather a low club, the candidate, who had been abusing the Campbell-Bannerman government, when the bells rang out for the New Year, was quick to quote :

'Ring out the old Government, ring in the new;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.'

A candidate who called himself a Tory and did not hold by newfangled politics, speaking to people who no doubt understood him, said : 'A Tory was old October; a Conservative, mild drawn ale; and a Liberal—a Liberal was swipes.'

'Show me a Radical, gentlemen,' said a certain politician, 'and I'll show you a liar.' 'I, sir,' said an angry man in the hall, 'I am a Radical.' 'Just come round the corner, then, and I'll show you a

fellow who said I could not find a Radical in this borough.'

But talking of liars. Mr. Lloyd George went down not long ago to speak in Wales, and the Mayor of the town was in the chair. He introduced the present Prime Minister with a few appropriate words. He said : ' Gentlemen, Mr. Lloyd George has come down to speak on Welsh Disestablishment, and especially to answer the Bishop of St. David's. In my opinion the Bishop of St. David's is the greatest liar on the face of the earth. But, thank heaven, gentlemen, we have here to-night one that is a match for him.'

Of course a good deal of the one candidate's wit is directed at his opponent, and savours of the sour. If the sitting member has been a silent member in the House of Commons, which certainly ought to be counted to him for a merit, his glib opponent will refer to him as a 'tombstone with the inscription rubbed off,' as one in fact did, or refer to him as a man of 'commanding reticence,' as another suggested—which was greeted with loud but misunderstanding laughter by the gentleman's own supporters: for a candidate is no good unless he can carry his claque with him. And even the least intelligent can understand when something 'nasty' is being said, and to them the 'nasty' is the 'nice.'

But to prove my proposition that there is little or no humour at elections, let me give you one or two specimens of attempts in that direction which were made at some of my own meetings.

A woman or lady (there is no greater puzzle in literature than the right and judicious use of these words) asked me how Tariff Reform was going to help women, and I had to explain that one thing

Tariff Reformers objected to was dumping, and I thought the lady would agree with me that 'it would be undesirable to have women dumped upon our marriage market. We have women enough in England.'

Now there was absolutely nothing in this to merit the storm of applause which followed in its wake.

Once I was speaking of the necessity of Tariff walls and said, 'England for the English'—but I added, 'And one Scotsman.'

I quoted Gilbert once that every boy that was born alive was either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative, and said it wasn't true—that every one was born a little of both. All men have a desire to keep what they have got, that is Conservatism; and all wanted to have something better than they had, that was reforming aspiration; and as for Socialism, it was stillborn. Now although that rounded off the sentence it was not true, for Socialism was born alive and kicking.

But a good deal that is sometimes by partisans regarded as humour is only bluff. Thus when a candidate was asked if he would vote for the abolition of mining royalties, he answered: 'I am not in favour of any kind of theft.' 'Neither am I,' said the heckler; 'that is why I asked the question.' 'Then,' said the candidate with nice assurance—'then we are at one.'

When asked by a young gentleman who had, I think, been called to the Bar, as to the Chinese in South Africa being confined to their compounds, as an indication of the allegation of the Chinese Slavery which was the stick to beat Mr. Balfour's government with, the candidate said: 'Why, undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge could not leave

their towns without a permit.' 'Nonsense,' said the young gentleman; 'I often did.' 'Ah, but you,' said the candidate, 'were a very naughty boy.' And the house—it was a schoolhouse—came down.

These illustrations establish the paucity of humour at election meetings. But that the chapter may not be quite dull, let me tell some quite old stories—to give light to a dull page.

I think it was Sir W. Agnew, the famous picture dealer, who was contesting a South Lancashire constituency, and was, as is the custom, comparing the performances of his own party with the performances of 'the other side.' 'Look,' he said, 'at this picture and at that.' But one of the independent electors administered a rebuke by shouting, 'No shop.' In the same election he was opposed by a well-known gentleman of great physical amplitude, a big man who, to keep a big frame going, had to eat and drink more than punier persons, his drink being the fine vintage of champagne. Indeed I have myself seen the honourable gentleman with his pint of Cliquot at breakfast time, in the Queen's Hotel, Manchester. The election joke or conundrum was, What is the difference between Agnew and Mr.——? and the answer was, 'The one is very fond of champagne and the other of sham painting.'

While we are on the question of liquor, I think I am right in saying that Lord Iveagh (then Mr. Guinness) once contested one of the Dublin seats, and on that occasion one of the posters of the opposition was a kind of scriptural quotation: 'Those that are not with us are agin us (a Guinness).' And below, as if it was the reference to the text: 'He brews xx and xxx.'

One expects perhaps more humour at Irish elec-

tions. Thus at one of these an Irish orator said he wished there was a window in his breast, that they might see that his heart throbbed only for his country. But a man in the crowd asked, perhaps a little vulgarly, 'if a pain in the stomach would not do as well?'

Once, too, when Lord Spencer was Lord Lieutenant (he had been accused of an invertebrate policy) he was addressing a meeting, and rested his hands on his haunches. 'I hope,' said one sympathetic man, 'that his lordship has not got lumbago.' 'Not at all,' said his neighbour, 'he is only feeling for his backbone.'

The candidate, who was gloating over the prophesied death of the Government which was formed in 1905, referred to an epitaph which a man had inscribed on a tombstone over his wife's grave, and applied it to what he called Campbell-Bannerman's 'awkward squad.' It ran :

'Tears cannot restore her,  
Therefore I weep.'

Another, referring to the way the Liberal Government had been creating peers, or 'dealing out honours with a liberal hand,' said that some of those 'spick and span' new lords would be surprised when the Government that had made them abolished the House of Lords, and might say, like the epitaph on the baby which had died when it was only two months old :

'Since I was so quickly done for,  
I wonder what I was begun for?'

A great ironmaster in Scotland, who was contesting a seat, was asked by a heckler what he thought of the 'Decalogue,' and, feeling himself on unsafe ground, said 'in his opinion it required amendment.'

A good many people in these days seem to be of his opinion.

Another candidate, more incautious, was asked 'if he was a teetotaller,' and answered with some heat, 'Quite the reverse.' But such an answer puts the people in a good humour, and that is an excellent atmosphere for a meeting.

Even a confession like Omar Khayyam's :

'Indeed, indeed, repentance oft before  
I swore; but was I sober when I swore?'

would go down well.

But I have said enough of the so-called humours of elections.

## CHAPTER XXX

### SOME MEN

Lord Rosebery in his *Life of Chatham*—Partiality and impartiality—Leaders in politics—Memory far from infallible—Lord Cawdor—The devil's advocate—Alfred Lyttelton—Mr. Balfour and overflow meeting—Lord Percy and capitalist working-man—Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman—W. E. Gladstone—Remarkable feat—Conversion to Home Rule of a Party—Sir William Harcourt—Henry Fowler (Viscount Wolverhampton)—W. E. Forster—Sir Charles Russell—Sir Richard Temple—Lord Cairns—John Bright—Lord Shaftesbury—Sir Wilfrid Lawson—Lord Salisbury—Disraeli—Lord Granville—Lord Cranbrook—Robert Lowe—Lord Herschell—John Stuart Mill—Sir Michael Hicks-Beach—Sir John Karslake—Sir John Duke Coleridge—Sir Alexander Cockburn—Sir Stafford Northcote—Sir Thomas Milvain—‘Foothills.’

SOME one perverted the words of Longfellow thus :

‘Lives of great men all remind us  
That there are not any great’;

but Lord Rosebery, with more charity and some neatness, says in his *Life of Chatham* : ‘Death in British politics magnanimously closes accounts with a credit balance.’ But it is a question whether that is always the case in that accountancy. After all, it is the duty of the men of to-day to arrive, if they can, at a true estimate of the worth or worthlessness of politicians whether they are living or dead. ‘Sometimes,’ as a mayor said at a municipal dinner, ‘one may err on the side of partiality, sometimes on the side of impartiality’ ; but although the latter error is rare, it behoves every one to try to speak the truth and to ‘set down naught in malice.’

I have referred to one sentence in Lord Rosebery's *Chatham*. I would like to quote another which he, at page 186, himself quotes: 'Leaders of parties,' said Pulteney, 'are like the heads of snakes which are carried on their tails'—which, of course, may be an excuse for some of the actions of leaders, but it is also an admission that it is in these heads, as in the case of snakes, that there are the fangs.

It may be that in these pages there are many inaccuracies, for memory is far from being, like the Pope, infallible, and I have had to trust to a sieve as if it was really a water-tight compartment of history. I never kept that egotistical thing, a 'Diary,' and have kept no notes of my doings, or the happenings which came my way. The book is what it purports to be—'Recollections,' and I have no doubt forgotten most things that were worth writing and remembered the things which might have well been left to oblivion, but whatever I have written I have tried to write the truth, especially about the men whose names are mentioned in these pages. These sketches are sometimes from memory, but in many cases I have mentioned public men whom I did not know personally, and in these cases I claim the latitude of the historian, whose imagination gives him a longer tether perhaps than his memory could.

I knew Lord Cawdor first as Lord Emlyn, when he sat for Carmarthenshire in the House of Commons between 1874 and 1885. I remember him then as a pleasant and intelligent chairman of committees. I knew him as chairman of the Great Western Railway Company, for I acted frequently for that company, and I came to appreciate his business capacity; but when he became First Lord of the

Admiralty I formed a higher opinion of his ability than I had up to that time entertained. It is occasions that test men, and Lord Cawdor was tested by the responsibilities of that great office, and was not found wanting. The qualities I have mentioned, his good-humoured politeness, his business capacity, were useful parts of his equipment, but there was in the comparatively small man a force which had been dormant until then, and which fitted him to hold and use power to the public advantage. I heard him speak twice while he was in office, once at a dinner of the 1900 Club, and once in St. George's Hall, Bradford, during the election campaign of 1909-10. He came down, as I have said, at the end of 1909, and tried to help in an uphill campaign. He was a little, clean, nice-faced man, whose smile ingratiated. He had not the steam-hammer that gives ton-weight strokes, but he wielded a hand-hammer which hit the nail on the head. The speech he made on that occasion was a defence of the House of Lords, a criticism of Home Rule, and he also referred to Old Age Pensions and Tariff Reform. But all such speeches are only for the day of delivery, or perhaps the next day. They very soon become obsolete, and fickle events put the words out of court. But one of his paragraphs referred to 'the Old Age Pensions lie' which was then current, and which had been given some vogue by Mr. Ure, the Lord Advocate, who indicated that if the Unionists were returned to power they would take away the pensions. Another speaker at Lord Cawdor's meeting said that 'such calumny was not work for the Lord's advocate, but for the devil's advocate,' and was cheered and 'booed' for his small jibe.

Alfred Lyttelton was a lovable man. But the

very phrase implies a softness in the nature of the man to whom it can be appropriately applied. We don't say we love Cromwell. We don't say—nobody has said he loved Carlyle. There is 'sterner stuff' in these than love can approach. We can admire, we can worship our heroes, but love—well, perhaps love is too good for them. But don't let me give a false impression of him ; the love one could bear to Alfred Lyttelton was not akin to pity, for he was a man who evoked sincere respect. He was a great athlete and, if I remember aright—for these feats have left little trace upon my memory—he was tennis champion and played cricket for England. But he was essentially a man with a conscience. I don't think Lyttelton could have done a mean thing. But when a man is lovable, and when he is a man, we may easily, and with excellent excuse, make a more than adequate estimate of his merits. He was, in the election of 1906, howled down at Leamington, which is no mark of demerit, and afterwards sat for St. George's, Hanover Square, and was Colonial Secretary from 1903 to 1905. He was thoroughly abused for his conduct of South African affairs, and 'Chinese Labour' was a nice stick to beat a rival politician with. 'He looked for judgment, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry.' That is a good description of what happened. Elections are not won upon righteousness or judgment, but on 'a cry.' At that time it was Chinese Labour or Free Trade or the Dear Loaf, and so he, with his colleagues, 'was hounded from office by a snarling press.'

But the calmer eyes of time, a little removed from that period of heated controversy and 'cries,' will see that he did his work at the Colonial Office well.

He had the conscience, as I have said, which made him considerable, but had not the imagination which would have made him great.

He also came down to Bradford in 1909, as the journeyman politician, to press the Government wares—some minor politicians (I was one of the poor eggs in the basket)—on a reluctant electorate. I do not remember much that he said at the meeting: of course the man himself one cannot forget. He had a face that was an introduction to friendship. As I have said, he was an athlete, but as mild-mannered as a woman, and goodness was shining out of his face all the time. I do remember, however, he said that ‘people had been talking of the decline and fall of the Unionist party, but the Unionist party declined to fall.’ A general election, too, he said, ‘was a close time for liars.’ He spoke, too, of the errors of the iniquitous Budget, for the meeting was called to denounce it—and, I still think, rightly.

Another speaker at the meeting referred to Mr. Lloyd George’s Limehouse speech and Mr. Winston Churchill’s Leicester speech, and said these gentlemen reminded him of the makers of bad sausages, who tried to conceal the rancidness of the meat by the quantity of pepper. Further, that Mr. Churchill, who had at Leicester said of Mr. Balfour’s speech that it was ‘four or five columns of insipid equivocation’—and that, he added, was the pepper of the gentleman who, if he lived in history at all, would be remembered only as the inventor of a big phrase for a lie (terminological inexactitude).

I was only once on a political platform with Mr. Balfour, and then I wasn’t. He came down to speak at Bradford on the Saturday before the poll, on the Monday in January 1910. But St. George’s

Hall, although I suppose it holds three thousand people, wasn't big enough for those who wanted to hear him, and there was an overflow meeting at the Baths. Now that is how I was on the same platform in a Box-and-Cox sort of way with our leader, for while Mr. Balfour was delivering his great speech in St. George's Hall I was making a stop-gap speech at the Baths, and when he came to the overflow meeting at the Baths I went back to St. George's Hall and spoke there. It is difficult enough either to speak before or after Mr. Balfour. If you speak before him, every one knows that you are only the farce before the drama ; if you speak after him, the people have heard enough, and are looking for their umbrellas.

I think it was in May 1909 that the late Lord Percy came down and spoke at a Budget protest meeting. He was a young man, under thirty. He lacked the big presence which, as in a man like Fox, is the sledge-hammer of oratory. He was a nervous man, all wires. He made an excellent speech there. On another occasion I heard him make another excellent speech at a dinner of the 1900 Club. But he fell into one mistake. This is the report of what he said :

Referring to the land-tax, Earl Percy instanced the case of a poor man who had a capital of £500. (Loud laughter and shouts of 'Oh !') 'Well, if nobody knows a poor man with a capital of £500, I am happy to say I do.' (Cheers, and a voice, 'I have no but eighteen bob a week.') And he proceeded with his illustration. We travelled up to London together after the meeting, by the night train, and he really was surprised that he had put his foot in it about the capitalist working-man. He was a man of real ability and much promise, and died all too soon.

So far I have been speaking of men I knew, men with whom in a minor sense I was associated in my meagre adventures in politics, but I claim the ordinary man-in-the-street's right to opinions about other politicians.

I have almost no right to remember Palmerston, for he died in 1865. But he bulked very large in his century. He was indeed a prematurely born Imperialist. His policy was a bluff heartiness and a high-handed attempt to make this country respected abroad, and sometimes he succeeded. Like a John Bull Englishman, with tongs-curled side-whiskers, he often put his foot in it, but the people were with him in the desire to make England a nation among nations and not a non-intervening nonentity in the world, and forgave him all his honest mistakes. He was blamed for his attitude towards Napoleon III. and the Chinese war, but he went to the country and came back with a stronger hand than ever. He was indifferent to domestic matters, was not an enthusiast for reform, and was really an excellent Whig statesman of the 'fine old English gentleman' type.

George Canning was a man of great ability and wit before my time. As a statesman he had 'brought in the new world to redress the balance of the old,' and in effect laid the foundation stone of the Monroe Doctrine of which we have heard a good deal, and he also wrote *The Needy Knife-Grinder*. It is by phrases perhaps more than by politics that he is most remembered.

Of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, except what the newspapers told me, I knew very little. He was chairman of an important committee of Parliament which inquired into the expediency of passing certain Bills by which certain railway companies sought to

split their ordinary stock into preferred and deferred ordinary stock—I was counsel for several of the railway companies—and he conducted the inquiry with acuteness and with courteous geniality. His round moon of a face was the natural seat of smiles, and I doubt whether he could have frowned in thunder, with flashes of the eye like lightnings—which was Gladstone's forte.

W. E. Gladstone was unquestionably a remarkable man. I have seen him fifty times, but never had a chance of speaking to him, although I knew his eldest son, W. H. Gladstone, who with Lord Frederick Cavendish was member with me of the Strand committee of the Charity Organisation Society. Gladstone had the central fire of a volcano, and sputtered in long sentences. I quoted from Lord Rosebery, who quoted from Pulteney, that 'a party leader was like the head of a snake, and was carried along by the tail.' But that is not always true.

There was a story told by Mr. Morley in a speech at Edinburgh delivered on the 7th June 1902. According to him, some one asked how it was that, in spite of the House of Lords, the Reform Bill and the Repeal of the Corn Laws were passed, and the answer was: 'The Duke of Wellington, who was very powerful in these days, went down to the House and said, "Attention! Right about face! March!" and the thing was done.'

That, then, was clearly not a case of the tail wagging the dog.

But Mr. Gladstone's most remarkable feat was the conversion, in almost as peremptory a fashion, of his whole party to Home Rule. Here again it was by the word of command. Nothing is more indicative of the great momentum of his character

than that achievement, which ultimately led to his fall. But while he had a compelling character and carried Houses of Commons with him by none of the little arts of politeness, but as it were, by the force of his spate, he was far from being a direct speaker; indeed much that he said was so involved as to be almost obscure. I do not know where I came across these lines, but they might have some indirect reference to Gladstone's oratory:

‘There was a strong man in the syndicate  
Who desired his position to vindicate,  
He rose to deny that he meant to imply  
So much as his words seemed to indicate.’

Sir William Harcourt was a big fleshy man of good bearing; but sometimes perhaps of overbearing. He had been at the Parliamentary Bar, but left it and went into the House in 1874, the year I had my first brief in the lobbies. He was a man of commanding ability, which he used for commanding, not to say bullying. He was a robust, not to say robustious (it is a dictionary word) speaker, and he informed the world that he was descended from the Plantagenets—and perhaps he was.

Henry Fowler (Viscount Wolverhampton) was born a man, was a solicitor, and died a politician. That is not so derogatory as saying of a certain person that ‘he was born a man and died a grocer.’ But perhaps the last state of a man who becomes a politician is worse than the first, and Fowler after being a successful solicitor went in for politics. Still, he had ability in himself, and his two daughters, who wrote clever Nonconformist novels, were clever too.

W. E. Forster, the member for Bradford (who passed the Education Act of 1870, and was at one time Chief Secretary for Ireland, where he acquired the name of

‘ Buckshot Forster ’), was a business man with slouching shoulders. I saw him in committee, and know what he said in an address on the Colonies. His *Life* was written by Wemyss Reid.

Sir Charles Russell, who became Lord Russell of Killowen, and afterwards Lord Chief-Justice of England, I saw little of. I was once in a case against him. He had a strong head, a strong face, but on occasion could use strong language too.<sup>1</sup>

There was a Sir Richard Temple in the House of Commons who had come back from India with some reputation, which I fear he did not enhance in Parliament. He had a right-angled moustache like a cat’s whiskers, and rather looked like an animated tom-cat. Lord Cairns had the incisive face and the incisive brain of a lawyer. Many of his judgments will live to be quoted, for it is by being quoted that judgments live. There are very few lawyers who have delivered judgments which are worth reading, but some have. John Bright had learned a plain style from the Bible, and made speeches which entitle him to be called ‘ an orator.’ He was an in-and-out politician. From 1870 to 1872 he was out of office, and did not appear in Parliament. In 1873 he was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—and did not, like Mr. Winston Churchill, object to be a well-paid official with nominal duties—but in 1882 he retired from the Cabinet on the ground of their Egyptian policy which culminated in the bombardment of Alexandria. In 1886 he was one of those who refused to swallow Home Rule, and became a Liberal Unionist. His speeches were great, but his economic creed was all in favour of the capitalist manufacturer.

<sup>1</sup> But we know the adage, *De minimis non curat lex*, has been perhaps erroneously translated, ‘ The law does not stick at trifles.’

However, it has been said that 'Charity begins at home,' and that by a child expositor has been defined to mean giving to others what you don't want for yourself. Lord Shaftesbury rode upon Philanthropy into fame he would not have attained on a less showy mount. Still, he was a good man, and wrote a beautiful, old-fashioned hand, and his signature was a triumph of penmanship. Sir Wilfrid Lawson had a great reputation as a humorist, and I have no doubt he did make good jokes; but so far as I knew him, and that was only as a committee man, or as chairman of a committee, he seemed to me to have as much humour as a frog, and I know he had as many fads as a madhouse. I don't want to be rude, but I think I may apply Charles Lamb's words to him. Lamb said of a certain person, 'The more I think of him the less I think of him.' I remember some one said of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's government, that if it was not a sagacious government it was a tenacious government. I know no word which applies so aptly to Lord Salisbury as 'sagacious.' He was a wise, courteous statesman, and gave an excellent address as President of the British Association. He had round shoulders, a great brow which seemed to be the cause of his stooping. But Lord Robert Cecil has the hereditary stoop, and all the sons have the hereditary sagacity. Disraeli was a great actor and wrote quite second-rate novels. He thought to steal the Whig's clothes by the Manhood Suffrage Act of 1867, but the pilfering did not succeed. He, a Jew, led the Conservative party in Britain with consummate cleverness, and himself conferred distinction on the peerage by becoming an earl. Lord Granville was a chubby little man who let things go and called it statesmanship.

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Palmerston really tried to become a statesman, and was rewarded for it by much admiration and long periods of office. Lord Cranbrook was made at the Low Moor Ironworks, but he had a good country complexion and a big strong frame, and as he was of a new family he naturally held by and did his best for the party of old families.

Robert Lowe was a shrunk, parched man with weak eyes—perhaps they were pink, for he had white eyebrows. He had been a lawyer in Australia, and wanted to stop the avalanche of Democracy which he found in full sweep on the side of the slope. He is remembered by his *ex luce lucellum*—of his match-tax. But there are other stories told of him. He saw a man in the House of Commons using an ear-trumpet, and said ‘it was sad to think of a man so throwing away his natural advantages.’ To him, too, is ascribed the saying, that ‘asking Gladstone a question was like pulling the strings of a shower-bath.’

Lord Herschell was a little very clever Jew done in Indian-ink. He was, after a long probation of waiting, a successful lawyer, law officer, and he became Lord Chancellor when conversion to Home Rule at Gladstone’s word of command merited recognition.

I saw but never knew John Stuart Mill, although I read his books sometimes with a good deal of disagreement. His creed was a hard rationalism, his politics a belief in competition and the devil taking the hindmost, his ethics a cautious regard for self. He was a Utilitarian of the dryest, a politician of the narrowest, but a man with clear words, like the distinct note of a long lean bell. He was a spare man with thin sharp features and a thin sharp mind. He got into the House of Commons for Westminster, and

that was the end of him. He had a great reputation as a philosopher and a political economist in his day, but it has been dying ever since.

Goschen I only met once at dinner, and as he was a great man and I was inconsiderable, I sat a long way from him at table, and could not even eavesdrop his conversation. His part in finance was the reduction of the interest on consols, which seemed a great economic triumph at the time, but has been regarded as a financial mistake since. Of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach (Lord St. Aldwyn) I saw more. He was Umpire in an arbitration at Singapore when I was one of the counsel, and he afterwards conducted an inquiry in this country for, I think, the Board of Trade, which involved the changes to be made at certain ports. I took part as counsel in the discussion, but I have really forgotten all about it. He had been 'Black Michael' when he led the Conservative party in the House of Commons, until the darkness of blindness threatened him, but he was fast becoming 'Grey Michael' when I knew him. He was a shrewd politician, some people declared with a bad temper, but that I am bound to say I never saw. He was made an earl, which is sometimes the recognition of great merit and sometimes not. The last time I saw Lord St. Aldwyn was in the morning-room at the Athenæum, upon an occasion more or less memorable. It was the 14th of October 1915, and about nine o'clock at night. Some one ran into the room saying the Zeppelins were over us. I went out on to the steps and saw, in the rays of a searchlight, a thing like a large cigarette in the sky to the south-west. The anti-aircraft guns were making a great deal of noise, and one could see the shells bursting in the air like

Roman candles, but all of them at a great way from the airship. This particular airship was in all probability the one that did the damage in the — at the —, and perhaps in —. After a quarter of an hour of uproar, as no shell was within a mile of its objective, the searchlight was put out, and the Zeppelin disappeared in the darkness, and so had Lord St. Aldwyn. I never saw him after that.

Karslake (Sir John) was popular—perhaps more popular than he would otherwise have been—by reason of the fact that he was always compared with Sir John Duke Coleridge, who wasn't popular. He was a tall, handsome, dark man, and people called him 'Jack' Karslake, which was, although a familiarity, indicative of affection.

Sir Alexander Cockburn was a politician before my time, but the tradition remained with us of some great speech he had made in the House of Commons; and it was remembered that he had said an advocate should use the sword of the soldier, and not the dagger of the assassin. He represented Great Britain in the *Alabama* arbitration, and was one of the judges who tried 'Arthur Orton,' and that made him better known to the public than any political career could have done.

W. H. Smith provided news and books at stalls, and had business capacity. He looked at politics from a business point of view. Sir Stafford Northcote (Lord Iddesleigh) has quite a respectable record. The routine of statesmanship was safe in his cautious hands, but adventure was beyond him. I knew Tom Milvain, I suppose, for forty years. He contested half a dozen seats at least, and sat in the House of Commons for Hampstead for some time.

He was rewarded for these exploits first by the Recordership of Bradford, and afterwards by being made Judge Advocate-General and a knight. He was a good fellow—I should say as great on the platform with his fists as he had been at Cambridge in his day when he was champion of the light-weights. If Alfred Lyttelton was fine porcelain—perhaps too fine for politics—Milvain was delf. Those who knew him were right sorry when he died.

When we compare these men with the political mountain-peaks of the eighteenth century—men like Chatham and Pitt, Fox and Burke—we see that really they were only, as it were, nice foothills below towering alps. These silhouettes, all in black paper, are possibly very unfair; but recollections are never absolute justice, and my memory, confining itself to a few words, has done its best.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### POLITICS AND THE FUTURE

Politics of to-day and the press—Change in aspect since the war began—‘Business as usual’—Duty of the opposition—Criticism—Recruiting tried—Bands and speeches—Kitchener creating armies—Had to face compulsory service—Sir John Simon’s opposition—Coalition not a marriage—Cannot go back to 1914—German methods of war, but German methods of state-craft too—Treitschke and war—Organisation—State service—Railways, etc., taken over and controlled by the State—We must win the war—Banking and German banking influence—Free Trade rejected by Manchester—The new social conditions and the outlook—Patriotism braced—Colonies drawn closer—The many deaths of our robustest and best men will alter the balance of the sexes—Superstition—The Mons Angels—Christianity the creed of the poor—The poverty of the future—Spending £5,000,000 a day.

IT would perhaps be a little absurd to write about one’s recollections of politics, and to refer to the turmoil of the past and the legislation that has come out of it, and make no reference to the politics of the immediate past—of yesterday. At the same time I should not desire in this book to enter into the arena of to-day’s discussions, which are the more immediate province of the press—which is, as it were, the loom on which history is being woven—but it is impossible for any political thought to ignore altogether the somewhat unique phases of politics since the war began, or to refrain from some speculation as to the possibilities of the future.

We tried, in the earlier months of the European

struggle, to get on with the arrangements which it was said had worked satisfactorily in time of peace. People talked of 'business as usual.' The Government remained in power and the opposition was expected to show its patriotism by neglecting what is regarded as the real duty of an opposition—criticism. That arrangement—although I think on the whole it was fairly carried into practice—was found not to be one which secured much success in the great enterprise of war, or in preparing for the more strenuous efforts both as to men and munitions which were clearly necessary if any success in the direction of victory was to be achieved. Recruiting was tried as a method of securing a sufficient number of men. Bands played, and big drums were beaten. Members of the Cabinet, like the Prime Minister, attempted by speeches to rouse the country from flabby slackness to a strenuous enthusiasm which would give the country the number of men the military authorities never ceased asking for.

Lord Kitchener was praised for the creation of armies, but it became evident that all these efforts would not, by means of what Spurgeon called the 'Giant of voluntaryism,' fill our trenches with sufficient men to win the war. Under these circumstances the Government had to face the necessity of compulsory service, but saw that any such proposal would be unpopular, and they most generously desired to share the unpopularity with their political opponents. And it was in this way that a Coalition Government was formed, and had to face the unimportant opposition of Sir John Simon and a party of perhaps half a dozen overlooked politicians. My idea is that this Coalition was not a marriage—where the twain shall be one

flesh—but a liaison which is intended to serve temporary purposes, and that both the parties on the Treasury Bench are looking forward to a resumption of party politics when, if ever, the war comes to an end. But the old order changeth, and we never can get back to the point that we were at in July 1914. The advances which have been made in connection with political ideals since the war began have been very great. We have not only had to adopt German methods of war to meet German methods of war, but we have had to adopt German statecraft with a view to 'staying the course' and winning the war.

Is it not, then, as Treitschke said? 'Without war there would be no State. It is through war that all states that we know originated. It is the essence of the State that it can realise its will and wishes with physical force.'

Have we not seen, then, the origination and growth of a new State here in Britain through this war?—war which was, according to Treitschke, a 'wholesome medicine against decay, and an efficient stimulus for waning patriotism.'

Then where do we stand? The State has demanded the services of every citizen who is of the required age, with the army. They have found that it is necessary to control, in the interests of a State in the throes of war, hundreds of our enterprises which were free before these calamitous days; and our State with its new powers manages much of the production, the exchange, and the distribution of articles of commerce. It has a hand on the railways, and upon hundreds of manufactures of war material, like shells or ships or aeroplanes. But they have not even allowed money to go its own way. They have controlled American securities with a view to manipulat-

ing exchange. They have borrowed these and other securities, as if the State was a great banker, from private holders. Enormous numbers of securities are now in the hands of the State. The Government controls the amount of petrol to be purchased by those who depend for their locomotion upon motors, and may, like Germany, have to resort to bread and meat tickets. The State is the trustee for the people, and, as the children said, 'we began to have jam when papa became a trustee.'

All these immense advances in the direction of the divine right of governments to govern wrongly are all excused or justified by the one principle: We must win the war.

But it is further urged that it is not enough to win the war; we must, when peace comes again, control trade so as to prevent the peaceful penetration—which resembles the peaceful picketing of labour—and make it certain that our enemies are not to be allowed, under the pretence of friendship, to secure the banking, the shipping, and trade influence in this country and our colonies which nearly wrecked the Imperial establishment when the war began. But in all these directions—the abandonment of the principle of the liberty of the subject, the drilling of civilians, the throwing over of Free Trade (as has been done by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, curiously enough in a building which is still called by the obsolete name of the 'Free Trade Hall')—we have, unconsciously it may be, adopted the creed of the Unionists who were in favour of Protection, and of the Socialists who were in favour of Collectivism. It will take a cleverer tactician than we have in politics to ignore these facts and to lead us in retreat to the old positions we had before the war began in 1914.

It is obvious, too, that the new social conditions must—if and when this war ends, or results (as God forbid it should) in ‘a draw’—profoundly alter the political outlook. The war has not only been the medicine of a State, but it has braced patriotism here and drawn our centrifugal colonies closer to the centre by a great centripetal tendency. And these conditions will not die down when the sound of the drum ceases. But these battlefields have had other lessons for our peoples. The deaths of those who had not decayed and had in their rottenness ripened for the grave, but of men in the heyday of youth, have made deep impressions upon many, and have renewed among many a religious sentiment which had almost disappeared in the days of commercial prosperity; and that sentiment has been associated with a revival amongst us of some curious superstitions. The Angels at Mons is only an illustration of this strange growth.<sup>1</sup> But superstition is a rank growth which will not die down at the signing of a treaty.

But, further, Christianity has always been the creed of the poor. It is a spiritual creed, and therefore it is a counterpoise—a consolation for the absence of material prosperity. Jowett remarked, ‘I am afraid there is more in the Gospels about the danger of being rich and the advantage of being poor than most of us are willing to admit.’ And we have Christ’s authority for saying that ‘a man’s life consisteth not in the superabundance of the things which he possesseth’—a deep truth which has been thought to justify an asceticism to which it did not really give countenance.

But what of the economic conditions after the war? People think that whenever we achieve peace

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge’s curious book about his dead son is another.

things will go on as before. That is a mistake. We are on the doorstep of the hovel of poverty. Even to-day the rich groan because one-fourth of their income is taken from them by the State, and the very rich who have to pay supertax have to give 8s. 6d. to the Government out of every pound they get. But the distress and poverty after the war which must result from the war spendings, which have drawn on the past and mortgaged the future, will be great, and will no longer be relieved by the lavish outgoing of £5,000,000 a day. We will start our peace with a millstone of debt round our necks, and it will take many years of prosperous trade to lighten the burden. We will have need of spiritual consolations in our distress of poverty.

And, further, we must look forward to a time when the old safeguards of traditional morality will be seriously shaken by the fact that the balance of the sexes has been and is being upset by the war, and by the fact that much of the work which was formerly done by men is now and must in the future be done by women. Does any one believe now that if women ask for a vote after the war, it will be withheld? Does any one doubt that the deaths of thousands of the young men of this country must seriously affect the question of sex relations in the future of the next fifty years?

But these facts must, to a very large extent, influence the politics of the future. How they will act, what the result of these seething influences will be, it is impossible to say. The outlook is far from clear, and in its very darkness it is threatening. The world began a new life after the French Revolution, and it will enter upon a new and untried existence after the war.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THOROUGHNESS IN POLITICS

A thorough people—Inquiries into Dardanelles expedition and into Mesopotamia expedition—We *inquire* into blunders, even into trade influence—German politico-commercial penetration—Banks and their influence—Mr. Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia—We have ourselves to blame—On the 89th day of the third year of the war we take the matter up—Shutting the stable door—A Cabinet of twenty-three to conduct war—Clever gentlemen drawn from civil life—War Committee's functions—Abdication of a Cabinet—Who is responsible for the unthorough policy of the country in the East, in Norway and Sweden, and at home?—Irish affairs and thoroughness.

WE are a thorough people. We have a raid in the Channel when we are certain that three of our destroyers and six drift-net boats were lost, and cannot be certain that we did any injury to the German raiders. We have an abortive campaign in the Dardanelles which cost us in money millions, and in casualties 100,000 men at least. We have a fiasco campaign in Mesopotamia, which was undermanned and under-medicined. But our thoroughness as a nation is shown by the fact that we inquire into these blunders. What a great people would like would be victories and not investigations, but we must put up with what we can get.

Another thoroughness is shown by the way in which we have dealt with what is called 'trade influence.' For the last twenty or thirty years Germans have been establishing a system which

was intended to be subversive of our financial and economic strength as a nation. It is a system which is called politico-commercial penetration which extended not only to the Mother Country but to the Colonies. Germans had not only with their trade penetrated into the very heart of the Empire in their own name, but under a fraud and pretence that they were British firms had disarmed even the suspicions of the people of this country. Some suspected these insidious proceedings even before the war began: all have now ascertained the pernicious facts since we have been at death-grips with Germany. But a good many of us have had to be indebted to the straight speaking of Mr. Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, for such information as we have obtained as to these disastrous methods. Of course we have ourselves to blame. We have invited foreigners into our trade. In the old days there used to be limitations in the civil rights of aliens. These we have swept away; and we have—under the pretence that our forefathers were narrow-minded, and that these disabilities which were placed upon our friendly enemies were unworthy of us—put them on an equal footing with our own people. Not only were the fraudulent traders under a British mask, but openly they established banks in our midst with which many of our citizens did business. These were, of course, great centres of German influence. But our thoroughness is shown by the fact that, in the eighty-ninth day of the third year of the war, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. M'Kenna, announced that the licence of the Deutsche Bank to carry on business under certain limitations had been revoked, and that it was hoped to revoke the licences

of the other two great German banking establishments. He informed us that it is 'essential to break the link between them and their British customers.' This is quite true, but it is on the eighty-ninth day of the third year of the war that we have come to that drastic conclusion.

The thoroughness of shutting the stable door after the steed has been stolen is characteristic of the British. According to Sir William Robertson—who rightly warned us not to look for an early end of the war: and we are not looking for it—it was only after we had been at war for two years that *we* began the war. This is another indication of the thoroughness with which this great enterprise has been conducted.

Could any one invent an instrument less suited to conduct a war than a Cabinet of twenty-three clever gentlemen who had been distinguished in civil life? It is true that that humiliating idea has occurred to the Government, and that we have what is called a 'War Committee' which is, we understand, responsible for the one business in hand—the making and, if possible, the winning of the war. But if so, what has become of the business of the country and the Government? Has the Cabinet—of all the different opinions—abdicated?<sup>1</sup> We are told that the ministers have not taken the real responsibility out of the hands of the soldiers and sailors, and if that is so, then apparently we are making our soldiers and sailors responsible for the policy of the country, which is really a matter for

<sup>1</sup> A good many events have happened even since this was written. We have had what some call 'intrigues,' a press revolution, and the formation of a National Government composed mostly of Unionists, but under Mr. Lloyd George, who used to be thought an extreme Radical politician.

the Government; and the Government seemingly occupy themselves by doing nothing, or perhaps dabbling ineffectually in Irish affairs and in questions of the registration of voters. That, then, is an illustration of the thoroughness which runs all through the political life of this country.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### SOCIALISM AND SYNDICALISM

A simple science—Wealth and labour—‘Belongs’—Mr. Blatchford—Are workpeople paid enough for their labour?—What would workers get under Socialism?—The capitalist—Capital necessary—A spade, a loom, represent past labour; a building, interest—Rent and wage—Private property—Cannot nationalise talent, invention, ability—Labour of hands, labour of heads—A fleecer class—The ganger—Watt and Stephenson—Payment according to needs—Shakespeare and a living wage—Obsolescence and improvements—Marx and Engels and revolutionary methods—Now people have votes—Jaurès and a general strike—Liebknecht—The Syndicalist’s philosophy of violence—The ‘fourth estate’—Coercive efforts—Boycotting and sabotage—Sorel and Berth—Social paralysis—Deadly and implacable conflict—Bergson’s philosophy of intuition—Direct action, Dublin strike, New South Wales strike—Economic organisations—Extreme politicians—Syndicalism and religion.

SOCIALISM is quite a simple science. ‘All wealth,’ according to Socialism, ‘is produced by labour, and therefore to labour all wealth belongs.’ This seems quite simple, but it is really meaningless. Even if it were true that all wealth were produced by the labour of men, it would be to the men and not to the ‘labour’ that the products would belong. But there is evidently a misunderstanding even as to the meaning of the word ‘belongs,’ for we are told by Mr. Blatchford that, ‘just as no man can have a right to land because no man makes the land, so no man has a right to himself because he did not make himself.’ But the real meaning of Socialism, apart from these abstruse absurdities, is that the

workpeople don't think they get enough for their services or labour, and the belief that at present a workman only gets about one-third of his earnings, while under Socialism he would get all his earnings.

Now if that is true it would be well to try to find the thief of the other two-thirds, and the Socialists think they have caught him and his name is 'the capitalist.' The capitalist it is, who is called the 'fleecer,' shears the silly sheep and appropriates to himself the clip which belongs to the flock. Now the way to remedy this robbery of the fleecer is to do away with private property, in land, in things, and even, it would seem, in the man himself. That capital is an essential of successful labour is obvious to any who will think that before the man can dig he must have a spade, and before he can weave he must have a loom. Now it is quite true that the spade and the loom are themselves the result of work or labour upon some materials given by nature—they were made. But that past labour which went to the making of the spade or loom has a right to be paid, just as present labour has, and if you call the spade not only a spade, but 'capital,' it will be seen that it is necessary to present labour and must have its wage, which we call interest. It is the same with the walls and the roof of the shed in which cloth is made. These, too, are a 'house made with hands,' and these hands have to be paid, or have already been paid, by the man who is said to own the manufactory, and must be repaid to him; and that payment we call rent. Now it is the division of the results of manufacture or agriculture between the owner of the house who wants rent, the owner of the spade or the loom who wants interest, and the man who digs or weaves who wants wages, that is the

problem ; and Socialism wants quite naturally to give the whole to the hands, and to succeed in that it has to make the State, as the representative of the workmen, the owner both of the land, the building, and the machinery, and therefore entitled to the interest and the rent. Of course if the hands or the people owned the manufactory and the loom on the one hand, or the land and the spade on the other, all the returns, rent, interest, and wages, would go to the people. That is why Socialism says, ' Do away with private property in land, in looms, in spades, in everything.' Abolish capitalists, make all the means of productive distribution and exchange the property of the State by confiscation, and you have realised the hope of Socialism, but by means of what used, in the old days, to be called theft.

But there is one thing that you cannot well nationalise, and that is talent, invention, ability, genius, and really it is to these that the world in a high sense owes everything. The loom did not make itself, it had to be invented. The 'crooked scythe' and spade had to be designed. But here it is worth noting that Socialism when it talks about labour mostly means manual labour—'hands'—and makes no allowance for the head labour of invention, of organisation, of distribution. Against your production, then, talent has a great claim ; so that labour must still give up part of its earnings, as it calls them, to pay the men who put them to work, who invented the tools, who found the markets. So you see there would still be what they call a 'fleecer class,' a parasitic class, and without these labour could achieve nothing. Your workman recognises the necessity of a 'ganger.' But labour is a mob unless it is organised and drilled like an army. Now

although you can nationalise railways and banks, what are you to do about Watt and Stephenson? They want their share, and their share would apparently be private property; and if they did not eat and drink all their share there would be something in hand, and that would be capital. So that after cheating Watt and Stephenson out of their genius there would have to be another confiscation; and the Watts and Stephensons of the future would invent nothing. This may seem absurd, but it is Socialism. Socialists say, with Mr. Blatchford, that a man does not belong to himself—‘Hamlet from himself is stolen away’—and one Socialist in a small backsliding from the rigorous logic of Socialism said, ‘I would nationalise the means of production, but a man would keep his toothbrush and toothpick.’ Still, I suppose we have to congratulate ourselves that, even in spite of logic, the toothbrush is not to be nationalised, and it is possible that even our clothes might be left to us—or lent to us—by the catering State.

Now the Socialists ingeniously get over the difficulty as to your inventor, or writer, or organiser, or genius of any sort, by a doctrine of the devil which declares that a worker is not to be paid according to his ability, but according to his needs; and as the needs of Watt or Stephenson or Shakespeare or Milton would be much the same as the needs of the office-boy who posts the letters, we would expect to get the steam-engine or *Macbeth* or *Paradise Lost* cheap.

But this is where the system breaks down again. If there is to be no reward for ability you will find that there is none, and you will have a world full of minimum-wage men, and in that desert not a single flower of genius will grow or blossom. Do you

think you will get a Shakespeare for a 'living wage' without a recognition of his ability? And if you recognise his ability, is not that a private possession which belongs to Shakespeare—which is in addition to the toothbrush you have already conceded to him? And ought he not to have the recognition of gain, just as the muscular work of carrying a hod has?

We have seen that past labour, or capital, requires its share out of the profits of production. But future labour, in the way of repair and maintenance of the machinery we have, the improvement of any means of production, and the making up for obsolescence, must 'stand in' and have a share of the products of these joint-stock productions. To secure the future, labour must forgo some of the profits of the present; and therefore the pledge—that as labour produces all wealth, labour is to have all wealth in the shape of present wages—is an obvious mistake which only gulls the poor workmen. There must be a store to meet these recurring requirements, and that store is capital. Proudhon had it that private property is theft; well, public property is a delusion and a snare, or, as I said somewhere, 'the new heaven and earth promised by Socialism would turn out to be a new hell.'

There is one feature of modern Socialism which is worth noting in comparison with the even more modern creed of Syndicalism. Marx and Engels in 1847 declared that the Communist party would fight along with the bourgeoisie, whenever it takes up its revolutionary rôle again, and advocated the turning and rending of the bourgeoisie by German workmen after the downfall of the reactionary classes. But the Socialists have now other weapons

in their hands than those which were to 'let blood.' They have votes ! and, as Jean Jaurès—who lost his life in the early days of the war—said, these will bring about 'the revolution that will be embodied in things, in laws, and in our hearts, not in formulas and words, and it would free the great work of the proletarian revolution from the sickening odour of blood, of murder, and of hate which still clings to the bourgeoisie revolution.'

They mean to vote daggers, but use none. They are determined to bring about their revolution by 'the gradual and legal conquest of the power of production, and the power of the State'; and in another place he says, 'We have in the legal conquest of the democracy the sovereign method of revolution.' He wisely deprecated a general strike, and saw that such a thing would only 'unite all the non-proletariat forces' against Socialism. Liebknecht, now himself in prison, ran his propaganda on similar lines, and anticipated a time when his party would be asked 'to participate in the government, and would be called upon especially to reform the conditions of labour.'

This is not the place to discuss these bloodless tactics ; indeed, I have written enough about them elsewhere, and pointed out how, in time of peace, the rival parties in this country had been playing the game for such plotters. But it is curious to turn from these views to the more sinewy opinions of the Syndicalists with their philosophy of violence.

The idea which is the foundation of Syndicalism is that the only way of getting justice for the working-classes—or the 'fourth estate'—is by the independent coercive efforts of the working-classes themselves ; and in that creed the word 'coercive'

not only smells but reeks of blood. In former times combination was for the purpose of government, now it is for the purpose of revolt. A strike is a means of making capitalists give up their savings, a lock-out is a method of starving the men into submission. Neither of these is a great moral agent, but each is really an economic crowbar for forcing coffers. But a general strike—the instrument of Syndicalism—is a means of attaining its end by overturning society. Boycotting and sabotage are the arms of this modern warfare. Sorel and Berth are the exponents of this philosophy of violence, and a general strike in a country where all the people expect so much is the means to immediate paralysis, by the withdrawal of all luxuries and the pinching even of necessities, and is the great means to the desirable ends of the 'fourth estate.'

The Socialists, as we have seen, deprecated a general strike, which had been tried by the Lyons weavers in 1834 and was said to be the inspiration of the Chartist movement of 1842; but the Syndicalists regard it as the means to their ends, and it seems to have been advocated by M. Briand before he was Prime Minister of France. The Socialists were to capture power by votes. The Syndicalists are in favour of direct action, and not of the representative system of modern government. It favours violence rather than discussion, and it is to be admitted that a philosophy of action is more likely to be effective than a philosophy of words.

According to Syndicalism, 'masters and men stand facing one another in deadly and implacable conflict,' and a trade union is an association organised with a view to war. There is one curious feature about this theory of reform through murder, which

is that we are told that both Sorel and Berth are undoubtedly always very respectful to religion, and also that they have founded their philosophy of cut-throatism in some curious way upon Bergson's philosophy of intuition—for we find Sorel saying that a general strike is the intuition of Socialism, and 'is in fact the perfect knowledge of the Bergsonian philosophy.' I fail to follow him, although I find that the Syndicalist theorists deprecate reason, and seem to rely upon that intuition which is the vague inspiration referred to by Bergson.

But Syndicalism passed from the books, and the speculations of writers, into 'practical reason' or 'direct action' first in Dublin, when Larkin made a fiasco, and again by a large experiment in that direction in New South Wales, when, we read, the Colony 'killed once for all the effort of Syndicalism to hold the community to ransom. The Government took power to arrest and imprison ringleaders, to seize trade-union funds, to stop strike pay, to break up the whole organisation of any strike directed against the means of public existence.'

The New South Wales strike was crushed in about three days. So the revolutionary violence of the unions has had a 'set back'; a colony has been courageous enough not to fly the 'white flag' on the approach of the apostles of violence.

Socialism, as we saw, trusted to politicians, to Parliament. Syndicalism, with some sense, disbelieves in that roundabout regeneration, and hopes by the direct action of the trade unions to bring capital to its knees. We will hear more of these methods in the time to come. Syndicalism is wounded, but it is not dead.

It may be interesting to note in this connection

a curious development which has taken place in recent times in connection with Stateism. The State, according to Treitschke, was everything, the individual nothing ; and the real full life of a State was war—and war fought not with kid gloves, but with ‘frightfulness’ as its real red weapon.

Now from the recent history of the country during the war, that idea seems to have come here to stay. It has been seen that whether, as he preached, ‘strife and conflict are the very life of a nation,’ whether it is true, as he said, that ‘all the States known to us are the children of war,’ the way to fight a great war to a great issue is to strengthen by every means the hands of the State. It is in this way that the babel of politics is to some extent hushed. It is in this way that we have a despotic Government with a muzzled press. The Government began as a popular Government, but has continued itself in power without an appeal to the people.<sup>1</sup> It is in this way that we are deprived of a dozen of our liberties which were at one time thought essential to existence, and that we are giving in some cases nearly the half of our whole income to the State to produce the ‘sinews’ of a war which is impoverishing the nations and robbing them of the lustiest of their populations. The State, to succeed, must strike as one man. Some pessimists have even sighed for a Dictator Saviour, and many seem to think that a Cabinet of twenty-three is a method of paralysis.

Now against these great developments which have in one way moved in the direction of Socialism—which desired to win its way to Collectivist power by

<sup>1</sup> A politician said, only the other day, the first thing we must do after the war is to get back our liberty. At present it is quite certain that we are not governed by ourselves under representative government, but by a clique of politicians.

means of the open avenue of politics—we have to note the antagonistic attitude of the Syndicalists, who look on the State as a political machine and suspect that it is run in the interests of others than the working-classes of any particular country. The Syndicalists' idea, as I have said, is that the trade union is an economic organisation, and that the workers' best course is 'to fight the capitalist and eschew politics and politicians.' They detest the bureaucratic State, and want to overturn the present fabric of society. It is worth while pointing out too, as we did above, that while Socialism repudiates religion—Marx having declared that 'the idea of God must be destroyed ; it is the keystone of a perverted civilisation'—the Syndicalists have leanings towards the faith ; and these facts make the existence of two antagonistic parties in the Church a matter of some interest.

There is one party in the Church that seems desirous to co-operate with the politicians of to-day, who would make terms with the Labour party and would call this curious alliance a winning of the masses ; and the other which regards the Church as a spiritual institution that should not meddle and soil its fingers with the dirty matter of politics. The Dean of St. Paul's is on the other side ; and after referring to the Bishop who published a sermon called 'The Democratic Christ and His Democratic Creed,' he says : 'Our clergy are positively tumbling over each other in their eagerness to be appointed court chaplains to King Demos,' and refers to the 'Nonconformist conscience' as 'no more than a rather tortuous and greasy instrument of party politics.'

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### SOME POLITICIANS

Difficult to speak of living men—Everyday gossip—Newspapers—Living men's record not complete—Lord Rosebery—John Morley (Lord Morley of Blackburn)—Lord Balfour of Burleigh—Lord Lansdowne—Mr. Birrell—Sir Edward Grey (Viscount Grey)—Viscount Haldane—Mr. Asquith—Mr. Balfour—Mr. Bonar Law—Sir Edward Carson—Mr. Churchill—Lord Wimborne—Demagogues and demigods—Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd George—Mr. Duke and Ireland.

So far I have only, here, spoken of men who were called politicians but who have passed away from that platform. It is more difficult to speak of men who are still behind the footlights on the stage and often under the limelight of party admiration. The criticism of these fills a great place in the everyday gossip—and the newspapers, which are gossip in print, deal with their doings from day to day. Besides, it is more difficult for a contemporary to deal with the living than with those that have passed away into the sanctuary of death. In the case of men who are still acting, their record is not complete; and even if it were the test of time has not been applied to the veracity of the statements that are made about them. Many of them, too—and I would like to respect even their prejudices—would not desire to be the objects of my invidious attentions; and unless one can speak what he believes about a man, it is better to hold one's tongue. At the same time, any book which professed to be 'Recollections

of Politics,' and which confined itself merely to wandering among tombs, would be properly regarded as to some extent an attempt to produce the play of *Hamlet* without any reference to the 'noble Dane.' It is, then, necessary to say something—a word or two perhaps thrown away—upon these men who are playing the game, who are, as it were, at the wicket, although they may still achieve a 'duck's egg' or a century, or may even carry out their bat with them.

Lord Rosebery has always been something of a 'quick-change artist'; but he grew tired of politics, had won the Derby, and retired. Still, he broke bounds occasionally with a rockety speech or a pungent letter, and he has occupied his refined leisure with better things than politics. His culture is considerable, his taste good, and his writings, at any rate, worth reading. He has just missed being greater.

John Morley (Lord Morley of Blackburn) began in literature and ended in politics, while Lord Rosebery began in politics and ended in literature. As a writer Lord Morley has contributed much excellent reading to our shelves, and if they remain on the shelves when our children and children's children are looking for books to read, that will probably be the children's fault. Possibly his tongue did not maintain for him the reputation that his pen had achieved. He retired from active political life when the war demanded not the 'folding of the hands' but more strenuous effort; and since then, perhaps he is still in favour of peace, he has held his.

Lord Balfour of Burleigh, an ample man, was Secretary for Scotland, and seems to like to be immersed in affairs. When nothing else is doing he

acts as an arbitrator. He is also a railway director, and is an exceedingly good business man.

It may be because I never had a seat in Parliament that I am somewhat suspicious of its doings and the men that do them. Indeed, I have some sympathy with the Scotch minister who prayed, 'That the Houses of Parliament now assembled may be kept from doing any harm.' And, indeed, I would echo the words in 'Chevy Chase' and make them apply especially to the Commons :

'God save the King, and bless the land  
In plenty, joy, and peace,  
And grant henceforth that foul debate  
'Twixt commoners may cease.'

But although I doubt their doings I still can have some respect for politicians, as these my notes will demonstrate. Take the case of Lord Lansdowne. He has made fewer mistakes than any of our politicians on the unpopular side. He has a cool head, a level temper, and does not wince. But what are we, speaking of mistakes, to say of Mr. Birrell, the neat writer, but the fumbling Chief Secretary? We have not heard the last of his colossal blunders, which are red with blood. 'Standing in a white sheet as he did in the Commons when he fell' is not enough. He has left a black memory as a politician. Sir Edward Grey (Viscount Grey of Falloden) has been much blamed for his poor diplomacy. Wanting allies, he has played cards which have made neutrals into enemies. He is a man with cool blood, and that ought to be good for the brain of a Minister for Foreign Affairs. Still, this is a case where the verdict is not yet. He has been arraigned—and there it must rest.

Viscount Haldane began by being a peculiarly

lucky man both in his profession and in politics. He is in person and character stout. A shrewd man who could never have been eloquent. His connection with Germany as his 'spiritual home'—although most of us look higher for a home for spirit—cost him his position as Lord Chancellor; and he retired with the same sort of reputation that a German spy might attain to, and now devotes himself to the important matter of education. But in his case, too, we are trying him before all the evidence is before the court—an adjournment would meet his case.

Mr. Asquith has many gifts, but humour is not the most conspicuous of these. He is a master of mighty phrases, and his career has shown him to be a political tactician of ability. Solid and serene, he has managed, notwithstanding mistakes which would have seemed irreparable, to retain his position as Prime Minister, and is still leading a Government composed of his sincere traducers and his implacable political enemies.<sup>1</sup> His memorable speech at Newcastle, when he said on authority that we were amply supplied with munitions, was a mistake, but his friends threw the blame on the authority. You can see him at his worst in a picture in the Benchers' Room at Lincoln's Inn.

Mr. Balfour has played fast and loose with politics, and has coquettled with philosophy. He has admirable gifts of expression, but always suggests more refinement than robustness. He is quite a deep smatterer in many matters. Physically he reminds me more of the willow than of the oak. In his fast-and-looseness he gave up the leadership of the

<sup>1</sup> This was written before the recent wrestling match in which a ministry 'fell' or was, according to some, tripped up.

Unionist party, and Mr. Bonar Law was chosen in his stead, but when the Coalition was formed he became First Lord of the Admiralty, and staggered the country by his first account of the battle of Jutland; and to make up for that mistake, when the Channel raid took place, only half the truth was told of the mishap.

Mr. Bonar Law ought to be made of sterner stuff, for he was in the iron trade, and has the position—the very responsible position in these days—of Colonial Secretary.<sup>1</sup> I think on the whole he has done well. His reticence during the war, before he and other colleagues were coalesced, got him a considerable reputation. Silence in a politician is sometimes invaluable, but it is an art which very few of them practice. He has distinctly advanced his reputation since the war began. It is hard to play second fiddle in an orchestra of all the discords. It is true the miscellaneous Government has shed several of its members. Sir Edward Carson went out, and is a considerable power outside these closed doors. Mr. Churchill went out, and has been indulging in runaway rings at the bell beside the door since his conscience would not allow him to take good pay for ample leisure. Lord Wimborne, who, as he himself said, was a kind of ornamental nonentity in Ireland, resigned the office of Lord Lieutenant, but was after a decent interval reinstalled in that great office.

Mr. Winston Churchill was a precocious youth who became prominent as a boy, and has kept his boy's round face into his manhood, and the mind behind the face is the petulant mind of a clever

<sup>1</sup> Now Chancellor of Exchequer in Mr. Lloyd George's National Government.

youth who has never quite grown up. He began as a Conservative, but became a Liberal—for, no doubt, excellent reasons—while he was still quite young. He turned his coat while it was still a jacket.

It is curious how many men in politics begin by being demagogues and end by being demigods. That was what happened in the case of Mr. Chamberlain, that is what is happening in the case of Mr. Lloyd George. He is a dapper little man with a sharp eye and a moustache like a bunker in his smooth-shaven lawn of a face. Abuse seems to be the high-road to success. It is not long ago that Mr. Lloyd George made speeches at Limehouse and elsewhere which set the heather of a fairly Conservative country on fire. He introduced a Budget which was, according to his opponents, not taxation but robbery. At that time he was execrated by the respectable people in the country, although even then those who were to have the spoils of the rich, admired and cheered the spoiler. But all that is past, gone and forgiven, if not forgotten. He has since the war stood for 'thorough'—Win the war. He even delivered a great speech on the text 'Too late' which almost impeached the Government of which he was a member. Then as Minister of Munitions, and at the War Office, he has shown that there is a driving power in him—which is what carries points, and has even carried him into the office of Prime Minister—and we want this point of winning the war carried. And now everybody has a good word for him. He is lauded like a successful general—and we have had few enough of these to praise in recent times.

Mr. Duke, now Chief Secretary for Ireland, began

in paper, proceeded from journalism to law, and after a distinguished career at the Bar has proceeded into the deep waters of politics, and has an ugly job on hand in Ireland. The choice of servants, even by a Coalition Government which shares the 'loaves and the fishes' between the parties, sometimes falls on the right man. He is not Cromwell, but he has an opportunity such as a great man might covet, and which a small man would run away from. Gratitude waits for the man who can solve that problem.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### SOME STRAY REMINISCENCES

Trumping land-taxers with Socialism—Nationalising a manufactory—A joke in the *Labour Leader*—Some heckling—‘ Too many lawyers in the House ’—‘ The black hand of Socialism ’—Questions by a butcher—Questions by post—A church bazaar—A drawing-room meeting—Prognostication—Counting unhatched chickens—A candidate who prophesied—The State and neighbour nations—A nation’s vocations—‘ The white man’s burden’—Our rule in India—‘ They should keep who can ’—Conservatism—Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity—Anti-Jacobinism—Advance of Liberalism—Modification of principles ‘ Doctrinal developments ’—Nationalism and world-power.

I GOT some pleasure out of a political meeting I held at a village, surrounding certain manufacturing works, which was mainly inhabited by the workmen employed in the clangor works. The managing director and the manager of the works were keen politicians and advanced (I suppose that is the right word) Liberals. They went about in the constituency praising my opponent (perhaps on the ground that he had most need of praise) and denouncing the poor Unionist candidate. They attended a considerable number of my meetings, and put as many questions to me as are in the Shorter Catechism. They had apparently been reading Henry George’s book, and were obsessed with the idea of nationalising land—they, I take it, not being land-owners—and they denounced me because I was a fossil and would not give the people what belonged to them.

They, in an evil hour, invited me to a meeting in their village, and I went. There was a fair gathering of men from the works, horny-handed sons of toil, and my little joke was a strong argument, illustrated with startling diagrams, showing how labour failed to get its fair share of the profits of production, and a plea not only for the nationalisation of land, but of all means of production. I told them how Mr. Ramsay Macdonald declared 'capital' was the enemy, and how the editor of the *Clarion* said that a frugal workman only gets one-third of his earnings. The men listened to me when I proposed to give them all the manufactories in the country—just as the clodhoppers had listened to those who proposed to confiscate the land—and were much struck with my suggestion that it was stupid to stop at the land when we were giving things to the people, and that we should hand over, with the land, the railways, the banks, the tweed works, the boiler works, etc., to secure to the workmen the whole of their wages instead of the beggarly third which they at present got. I believe the labouring men thought that my logical conclusion was sound, but the managing director and the manager listened with long, dubious faces, and never asked me to address another meeting at their village.

There is not much amusement to be got out of political literature, but I was the subject of a joke—I suppose it was—on one occasion. In the *National Review* for 1906 I published an article on 'The Coming Social Revolution.' I pointed out how we had proceeded a good way along the Socialist road, and intended the article to be a solemn warning against going further in a perilous direction. In some places

the article was praised, but nowhere so much as in the *Labour Leader* of the 23rd November 1906, under the heading 'Is Mr. Balfour Browne a Socialist?' and the writer of that article says that reason for the question is because 'he (Mr. Balfour Browne) has written an article in which, with captivating force and clearness, he describes the extraordinary progress that Socialism is making in the world, and proves the irrefragable logic of the Socialist position. It is by far and away the most effective exposition and telling justification of Socialism that has been published in Britain for many a day.' And the writer goes on to try and prove that I am an advanced Socialist, from an article which was intended as a grave warning against that fallacious creed. Still, the joke—the writer's, and not mine—was well done, and I had some pleasure from the misplaced and undeserved praise of the *Labour Leader*. But what would the writer of that article have thought if he could have seen a report of my joke at the boiler works?

I was asked at one meeting if I was not of opinion that there were too many lawyers in the House of Commons? Well, candidly, I think I would have answered the question that that was my opinion. But then the heckler would have thought that he had the best of me with his *argumentum ad hominem*. So I said, 'If I get into the House of Commons I mean to give up the law (I knew I could not practise at the Parliamentary Bar) and the profits.'

On another occasion a man mentioned to me a poster which referred to the 'Black hand of Socialism,' and asked, 'What coloured hand Mr. Balfour

Browne would like for the capitalist ? ' The answer was obvious, and I guessed it right the very first time : ' Clean hands.'

Once in Dumfriesshire a Mr. Thomas M., a butcher, asked how it was that in none of the places with tariffs were wages so high as in Britain ? ' Mr. Balfour Browne said (I am quoting from a local newspaper) it was not the case that we had the highest wages in the world. The average wage in Germany was only 19s. 0½d., in Britain it was 33s. or 34s., and in the United States it was 46s. 4½d. But in Germany and France people lived more cheaply than in Britain, and did not eat so much butcher meat.' (Loud laughter. A voice, ' Oh, that 's a guid yin ' ; and another, ' That 's worth the shilling.') It was a fluke, however, for I did not at the time know that Mr. M. was a butcher, but saw that something had ' caught on,' and sat down.

Sometimes the heckler reserved his questions and pelted you by post. Thus on one occasion, on the opening of a bazaar in aid of the funds of St. Peter's Church Schools, I had to make a speech, and I praised the side-shows and said that although the people could not go in without paying they could pay without going in, a joke which must have been made by Artemus Ward. But I went on to tell the people, what I thought an appropriate story, of a High Church clergyman who, in conversation with a Low-Churchman who was also the incumbent of a church, asked him : ' Do you have matins in your church ? ' ' No,' he answered, ' we have kamptulicon right up to the altar rails.' The next morning I had a letter written in a very old-fashioned, ladylike hand—all angles, like the broken bottles

on the top of a wall—in which the lady asked me ‘if I thought it right to make a mock of religion?’

There was a lady who was an indefatigable worker in the constituency. She was large and fat, and when she laughed she shook in ripples like a jelly. She had been married to a husband of quite disproportional smallness and thinness. This good lady gave what was called a drawing-room meeting all amongst the stuffed birds and antimacassars, at which I was to meet some of the lady workers and have a cup of tea. At the last moment, however, the lady of the house, with a smile which trembled on her cheeks and chin, asked me to ‘say a few words to the lady workers.’ I said that this had been forced upon me, and the phrase reminded me of a story of a man in America who was going to be married, and made a bargain that at the breakfast there should be ‘no speeches,’ just as a corpse bargains that there are to be no flowers. But when the time came the company cried out the more, ‘A speech! A speech!’ and the poor bridegroom had to comply. He rose and, placing his hand kindly on his wife’s shoulder, began: ‘Ladies and gentlemen, this thing has been forced upon me.’

When I had finished my few words, a young lady came up to me tittering, and said: ‘Didn’t you know?’ I did not know, and don’t know to this day, but somehow in that story I had put my foot in it.

Prognostication in politics is a very difficult art. Of course it is quite wise for a candidate to be hopeful, and to prophesy success on the following day, although his poor heart may be in his boots. It is

also natural that your agent and canvassers should look at the bright side of things. But what strikes me about elections is the worthlessness of all forecasts. I remember sitting next a candidate at dinner on the night of the declaration of the poll. He could have had no object in throwing dust in my eyes. While we were talking it was past eight o'clock and the poll had closed. He assured me that so perfect was his organisation and information, although he could not say whether he would be 'in' or 'out' he knew that it would only be by two hundred votes, whichever happened. An hour or two afterwards we were at the Town Hall, and the over-sanguine candidate was out and his rival in by over four thousand votes. That indicates the worthlessness of prognostication.

There is no more difficult question connected with politics than that which deals with relations of a State to its neighbour nations. In the case of the individual, the golden rule was to do to others as you would have them do to you. To respect yourself and respect others is wisdom. But wisdom is often so vague as to be of little use. Even with regard to the conduct of an individual, we deny a neighbour's right to neglect his drains so as to poison those who are living near him; indeed, we know that society will not tolerate the individual liberty which was at one time the ideal of statesmanship. The days of 'Let alone!' or 'Hands off!' as the rule of a State in politics, have gone by, and the State interferes in various directions even with the innocent right of a man to do as he likes with his own.

But can we apply the rules which are applicable to individuals in a community to the members of

the Comity of Nations ? How is a great nation to behave to its neighbours. Well, one solution of this intricate problem has been suggested, that 'national existence means the capacity to fulfil the national vocation.' But that is a creed which would seem to justify almost any conduct. The question, What is my vocation ? can only be determined by the man for himself. Is the question, What is my vocation ? to be answered by each nation for itself ? How about my neighbour's sewers ? The vocation of a nation is to exist. But many might well believe that it was the vocation of a nation to grow. It is the vocation of the scholar to teach the ignorant. Is it not the vocation of a civilised State to rule and to educate a less civilised community ? Is not that the justification of our rule in India ? And is it not the same swelled-head idea that has made Germany desire to be a world-power ? There is not only a vocation but, as Kipling has indicated, a correlative duty—'the white man's burden.' But will not these principles justify a policy of conquest, just as in the case of an individual while still a child they justify punishment and coercion, and in the case of an adult they justify many rules in restriction of personal liberty ? 'Vocation' is a nice word which seems to imply divine credentials to the strong to exercise the good old rule and simple plan, 'that he should take who has the power,' but also the sanction to each nation, 'that they should keep who can.'

Conservatism, it is said, came into existence as a protest against the doctrines of the French Revolution. It won't do nowadays for any one calling himself a politician to decry the Democracy. It is here with us. It is here that the catchwords which

have rung in our ears are misleading. 'Liberty'—there is no such thing. You can hear the people who were 'Liberty and Property' folk mourn its death. We know that labour 'is organised' (and that was one of the strongest planks in the Socialists' platform); the nation is drilled and conscripted. There is no such thing as 'Liberty.' 'Equality' is as obvious a fallacy. There are no two men alike, no two men equal. 'Fraternity' is another pleasant untruth, or a dream of those who, like the French Revolutionists, were drunk with blood. Yet it was on these impostors, the Trinity of the Revolution, that they thought to found a state—as if a state could be founded on anything but truth, and as if we were not still in search of the foundation stone.

But what has become of the Anti-Jacobinism of the Conservatives, the attempt by means of groynes to save from the waves the solid land which was our foothold? Although 'wise preservation' was, as we saw, the motto of Conservatism, it has had to admit the necessity of gradual advance. Liberalism too, it may be said, which was originally pure individualism, has had to shift its ground, for there it was shoulder to shoulder with anarchy, and in the struggle in the nineteenth century between the 'do-nothings' and 'do-alls' in politics, the 'do-alls' or Socialists won.

It is in this way that both Conservatives and Liberals have had to modify their principles and make 'doctrinal developments' in their political creeds. Each of them has adopted what is called humanitarianism. They are both anxious to be charitable institutions, to help the poor and relieve the oppressed, to let the people have good houses

and happy homes, leisure and amusement, at the expense of the rich. There is also an attempt, as we have seen, to recognise Nationalism, or the individual right of small nations to continue to exist, as against the bloody propaganda of a world-power which desires to absorb.

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